



THE GRANGE GARDEN



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THE
GRANGE GARDEN

A Romance

BY

HENRY KINGSLEY

AUTHOR OF

'THE HILLYARS AND THE BURTONS' 'NUMBER SEVENTEEN' ETC.



IN THREE VOLUMES—VOL. I.

London

CHATTO AND WINDUS, PICCADILLY

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THE GRANGE GARDEN.

CHAPTER I.

THE GHOST CONTROVERSY.

THE most foolish person at Weston would never say to you that the Grange was haunted, but the very wisest person in the village would not care to deny that there were some strange things about the Grange Garden. The simple and good people in the extreme west of Shropshire, within sight of the mountains, made the ghost in Weston Grange Garden a matter of belief: they were apt to be almost quarrelsome over the affair,

because the Ludlow people had a most indisputable ghost in the Castle, which they sometimes, rather offensively, set up against the Weston Ghost. This of course was not to be tolerated by the extreme party in Weston: Ludlow had certainly thriven more than Weston, but there had been a time (early in the second century) when Weston had been twice the place that Ludlow ever was even in the days of Sir Henry Sidney. The proofs of the past were all around them in the gigantic Roman mounds, and still more in the cairns and Menhirs which topped their downs on the Welsh Marches. Ludlow people were the best of people: they would trade with them and intermarry with them, but they were mere mushrooms of eight or nine centuries, and they were not in a position to put their ghost against the ghost of Weston.

Very few had seen this ghost or ghosts, but for the honour of their village two or three of the Westonians took the matter up, and went to the Rector about it. He asked if any one of them had ever seen it; the answer was a most reluctant no; he asked if anybody's father had seen it; and a young man said that his grandfather had, and that his grandmother had told him that they had seen it. The Rector said,

‘My dear friends, if the Ludlow people will show me their ghost, I will ride over and see it. It is evident, however, that we cannot show them ours. I would not trouble about this matter: we shall only annoy the very kind ladies who own the Grange.’

Here he was interrupted by a hot man who spoke rapidly in Welsh.

The Rector answered him in Welsh, and was only partially understood by his audience.

He pointed out that the ghost had not been seen authentically for two hundred years, and that there was no proof of its ever having been seen at all. He lost his popularity with the small ghost party from that time, good man as he was. They determined to have a ghost better than the Ludlow ghost, and they staked the reputation of their village upon the fact. The election for the county partly turned on this argument: the Liberal member said that he was one of the last people to deny the appearance of disembodied spirits, and the ghost party at Weston voted for him at once, and brought him in too. As he got in by a majority of three, it is possible that the ghost did it.

CHAPTER II.

MRS. MORGAN IS FRIGHTENED.

THE fact of the matter was this ; there was not one ghost in the Grange Garden, but two ; the two ladies who attended to the Grange Garden saw these ghosts continually, and talked about them between themselves ; but seldom among their neighbours, for their neighbours rarely came to visit them : in fact, no one came near them for above a year except Mrs. Morgan.

She took that liberty one day, but she never took it again. She was kept waiting in the drawing-room for some time, after

which one of the ladies who lived in the house came down. It was Lady Madeleine Howard : and she sat down perfectly silent.

This was disconcerting ; but Mrs. Morgan had all the wonderful attacking power which we see in the Celt, be he French, Welsh, Highlander, or Irish. Prestonpans, Harlech, nay even the united efforts of the French and Irish at Fontenoy, were unknown to her ; but she stood to her colours, and did not precisely tell the truth. She said,

‘I have come to ask after the health of Lady Alice Browne.’

A Norman like Lady Madeleine was not to be outspoken by a Welsh woman, and so she said,

‘She is extremely ill, Mrs. Morgan. I doubted if I should have got her through the night. Have you any honey ? I have none. Can you give us any ?’

‘Lady Madeleine,’ said the goodnatured Welsh woman, ‘she shall have all the honey in our house.’

‘That would be more than she requires,’ said Lady Madeleine; ‘but if you could send us some, I should be very much obliged. Will you walk in the garden?’

‘Will you accompany me?’ said Mrs. Morgan.

‘Surely,’ said Lady Madeleine. ‘I am not afraid of ghosts in any way. We have too many of them here to think anything about them.’

‘Then the story is true about the ghosts?’

‘Yes, Mrs. Morgan,’ said Lady Madeleine. ‘We certainly deal in ghosts, and that is the reason why we do not see our neighbours more.’

‘Your ladyship is kind to me, then.’

‘Yes, if you choose to use the word kind,’ said Lady Madeleine. ‘Your father was a great friend of my grandfather’s. He was a loyal soul, and I think that you are. I am going to give you my confidence to some extent. Can you keep it?’

The brave little Welshwoman said ‘Yes.’

‘There *are* ghosts here, and hideous ghosts. You shall see none of them, my dear, only keep the belief alive. We wish it to be believed that this is a haunted house. It is necessary that it should be so. The Rector knows only half: we could not trust him. I think we can trust you. I earnestly hope that we can trust you.’

‘You may, indeed, Lady Madeleine,’ said the loyal and good woman; and then she clutched her arms in both her hands, and said in a whisper, ‘God help us!’

A curtain was raised at the end of the room, and some one stood before them. It was what had been once a very beautiful woman. The person was dressed in white, and there was a ghastly pallor on her face. Her eyes were the only thing about her which had any colour: they were very large and pale blue. She passed them over Mrs. Morgan's eyes without recognition, but she fixed them on Lady Madeleine's, and she said quite quietly, 'Not here.' She then disappeared behind the curtain.

'It is only one of our ghosts, dear Mrs. Morgan,' said Lady Madeleine. 'Let us come and walk in the garden.'

'But it was not really a ghost?'

'My dear soul, of course it was,' said Lady Madeleine.

'Are we going to see any more?'

'Come and see my Phlox Drummondii,'

said her ladyship. And so they went out into the garden.

A very loud voice called from an upper window, 'See they cut that vine, my dear, or it will be all over the place.' Mrs. Morgan knew that voice as Lady Alice Browne's, whereby she knew that that lady was at all events not dying.

Mrs. Morgan and Lady Madeleine walked for some time in the garden. When Mrs. Morgan returned into the house she was taken ill, and Lady Madeleine revived her with wine, and running upstairs fetched down Lady Alice Browne. A conversation passed between the three ladies, and Mrs. Morgan went away in her pony carriage, having once more pledged herself to secrecy. She never came near the *Grange Garden* again for many a long day. She had been utterly terrified.

After this, her devotion to the two ladies knew no bounds. Every flower in her garden, every peach upon her wall, was at their service : sometimes when she had something peculiarly rich and rare, she marked it ‘for Clara ;’ but she told nobody the mystery of the Grange Garden. Her husband asked her once, and once only : she threw her arms round his neck, and answered in Welsh, ‘There is a drama of self-sacrificing love going on there such as has not been acted for many a long year. They trusted me : would you have me betray them?’ It was her wild Welsh way of speaking, and he answered in the same tongue, and in very much the same spirit.

CHAPTER III.

THE MYSTERIOUS ARRIVALS.

LADY MADELEINE HOWARD and Lady Alice Browne had tenanted the Grange now for many years : the freehold which comprised the rather large estate of nine hundred acres belonged to Lady Madeleine Howard absolutely, and the larger part was let to three farmers. Lady Alice was supposed to have a considerable funded property, for between them they by works of charity did what the ghost-elected member characterised as pauperising the parish. He did not, however, say that within a mile or two of Weston, or

even the ghost votes would not have brought him in. He reserved that remark for a working man's meeting at Shrewsbury.

Their case was like that of many other women, they had no personal attractions ; the reader must judge of their powers of conversation ; one of them at least had a temper, which, in the English language, always means a bad one. They failed utterly in society, and were returned over the counter of society as bad shillings. They were not *nailed* to that counter, as many much prettier and more clever women were during the Regency of George the Fourth, but they were simply returned. They were *then* both plain, and some said stupid ; and although Lady Madeleine Howard could dance very well, and Lady Alice Browne could sing tolerably, it was of no use for anyone to speak to them. No one, save once, pro-

posed to marry either of them, and they would not have listened to anyone who did so. They were both extremely poor, and they had formed a friendship for one another so strong that the intrusion of a husband would have been a mistake on the part of the intruder. The first advances towards that friendship were made by Lady Alice, who disclosed her secret, as the reader will see, many years afterwards.

They had two seasons in London, and met very often. They mutually hated it, and told one another so. Why should they have loved it? Stupid as they were, they had sense enough to know that they were laughed at. If either of them had been rich or handsome, they might have got a husband, and have made their lives miserable: both of them were spared *that* temptation at all events, they declared.

In the same year, and within two months, they found themselves extraordinarily wealthy. Lady Madeleine Howard's aunt died leaving her the Grange (and its Garden), with nine hundred acres of land. Lady Alice Browne's father died, leaving her the personal property. Why he did so no human being can tell. When the will was proved, and such of the money as the lawyers left was paid in, Lady Alice Browne had thirty-six thousand pounds.

The two plain girls—they were little more than girls at that time—determined to retire from the world and live in peace together. They went to the Grange, and were there for ten years without one shadow of trouble. They had shut the doors on the world : they had plenty of money ; they did not care for society ; they were happy in one another's society ; and they cultivated

flowers and vegetables, and farmed. They had utterly thrust the world out. People gave up inviting them, for they seldom came: when they did, they were in old fashions, and they obviously hated the whole business.

Lady Madeleine said once to Lady Caradoc, the wife of the Lord Lieutenant, 'We, my dear, have utterly retired from the world. We have given up all human responsibilities: and we are very happy.'

'I tell you emphatically,' said Lady Caradoc, 'that I don't see my way to that. What right have you to give up human responsibilities? You might as well deny that the whole of human life is a great fight with the evil one.'

Lady Madeleine Howard smiled. It was nearly the last smile which was seen on her face for some time. Lady Caradoc was far

too emphatic; she had no manners; but very shortly after she spoke of the evil one, that gentleman came to Lady Madeleine Howard's door with a vengeance.

The wind was thundering in from the south-west, and shaking the chimneys of the Grange. The servants had been sent to bed, and Lady Alice and Lady Madeleine stood ready to open the door. A carriage drove up in the darkness; and the two ladies went out, carrying a lantern.

The first person who got out of the carriage was a girl whose beauty was evident, even with the light of the lantern. Then there was a pause: and the secretly listening servants heard footsteps, as of those who carried a coffin. Struggling, staggering footsteps as though the weight was great, and the coffin of lead. Then a door was closed, and silence reigned in the house for

a time: at last were heard the sound of the footsteps of several men, who went out, shut the door behind them, and drove off.

The next day the two listening maids were quietly dismissed, with considerable gratuities. They went very quietly, but as both of them lived at a distance, they went through the village at once, only leaving behind them a legend in the village that a coffin had been brought into the Grange, and buried in the Garden.

Unfortunately, it seemed at that time, such was not the case. No dead man was carried in by those shuffling footsteps which they heard ; but a living one.

The two ladies had tried to retire from the world, and from all trouble ; and into their luxurious and quiet rest Divine Providence had sent them a most fearful affliction, from which there was no escape.

CHAPTER IV.

THE GRANGE.

THE Grange was an early Tudor house, with large, low rooms, four staircases, and dormer roofs, large enough to house a regiment, as indeed had been once done, as Lady Alice always insisted, during the Wars of the Roses. She pointed out with pride a large rose-tree which covered the south or garden side of the house, as having been planted by a Plantagenet with his own hand. As the rose was a *Jaune Despray*, which was only invented in 1840, this was on the face of it improbable; but she held her own against Lady Madeleine, who knew a little more

history than she did, and mildly declined to believe in the rose. At last, Lady Alice dug up an obviously Cromwellian cannon ball in the Garden, one of those nasty six-pounders which did so much in the history of England; with this proof of the authenticity of her theory, Lady Madeleine was afterwards silent, not from conviction, but from good nature.

The Garden was large (nearly half an acre), and must have been in cultivation nearly three centuries. It was surrounded by very high walls on all sides: in the centre was a large sheet of grass, divided by four gravelled walks, meeting at a sun-dial; at the further end from the house was a square pool of very clear water, fed by a brook, lined with stone, and swarming with more trout than either of the ladies could count. They were free to come into this basin and go away again: they were the

only creatures, except the butterflies and birds, who were able to enter and leave that garden at their will.

It was a very well-tended garden, a paradise of flowers, which in summer-time made the air faint and heavy with their scent : wallflowers were in every cranny of the walls, while lilac, syringa, and hawthorn would, in calm May nights, when Clara might be walking, perfume the mere sigh of wind which came from the distant Plinlimmon.

Since the mysterious arrival which we have described above, all the gardening was done by one old man who lived in the house with his wife, and who, with her, constituted the whole domestic establishment. The ladies helped him considerably : they were used to the work, and they liked it ; and the garden was always in excellent order ; but no one out of the family ever entered it, except on one occasion Mrs. Mor-

gan. She saw quite enough to prevent her going there again for some time.

Beyond the fish-pond, at the extreme end of the garden, there were three old cedars, and under the shadow of them a door in a wall which opened into a lane. It was extremely dangerous to pass through this lane after dusk: the ghost might be upon you in a moment. Farmer Joyce, a most respectable man, with as much imagination as one of his own haystacks, saw the ghost: it was in black, and passed him without any sound. Several other people saw it, but they were contradictory in their accounts of it. Some said that it was dressed in white, some in black. They were both right: the ghost was dressed differently at different times, but farmer Joyce on one occasion utterly horrified the village; *for he saw both the ghosts together.*

CHAPTER V.

LIONEL AND CLARA.

ONLY assuring you that this is not a painful story, but one which I hope makes one think better of one's fellow-creatures, I must enter into some very painful subjects.

Lionel and Clara were orphan brother and sister. He was ten years older than she was, and when she came out in London he had made a good name in the world. His wife brought out Clara and introduced her to society. Two months after the London season began, the man whom we call Lionel, with his wife and sister, disappeared from society. The wife of Lionel, as was

well known, retired into a religious house at Brussels. What became of Lionel and his sister the world did not care to enquire. He was only a third son, without the hope of inheritance. He was very handsome, and had married a wife out of a convent who was under the protection of Lord and Lady Longmynd. The sister was an extremely handsome girl, who might have married anyone. She had cast in her lot with her brother, however, and must take the consequences.

What happened? Lionel's wife Edith was away, when their child died. To her unutterable horror, Lionel not only heard that she was unfaithful to him, but that she believed that he had murdered her child through jealousy. And Doctor Bursstenberg, his informant about the whole matter, clearly proved to him, that both things were

practically true. That he had killed his child, and that his wife was travelling in the company of her cousin, a Pole, on the Continent !

His wife and he never met again for many years. She, almost at once, joined, as we said, a religious house at Brussels, and began the digging of her own grave. She was so slow about it that it is not deep enough yet. Clara was alone with her brother when the dreadful and apparently truthful news came. She was afraid of his laying violent hands on himself, and she never left him alone when she could help it. But he eluded her, with the cunning of utter ferocity and despair. She searched London for him ; but it was useless : a month passed and she did not know where he was. At length she got a letter from Strasbourg, from a Frenchman whom she knew, begging her

to come there. She went at once, and brought her brother home. There had been a duel, as she found, at Kehl, between him and a certain Count Vamberesky, a cousin of Edith's. Lionel had killed his man, but he had far better have killed himself. His adversary was as good a shot as he was, and the speechless mass of humanity which was carried into the Grange Garden could be looked on by the world no more. That seemed evident.

Clara, a girl who had only been brought up in the ordinary ways of the world, took her resolution at once : she wrote the whole story with every detail to Lady Madeleine Howard, her aunt, entreating her to let her bring her poor utterly ruined brother to the Grange to die.

The answer was singularly emphatic and curious ; it ran thus :—

‘My dear—I never saw you much, and I thought you peculiarly frivolous and silly. You show the old blood now. I never dreamt that it would have come out in you.

‘Bring him here. I have consulted with Alice, and she says yes. We have been trying to escape the responsibilities of the world, but God has sent them home to us again.

‘Lionel is blameless, except that he should not have fought that duel. If anyone was to be killed, I am glad that he killed that scoundrel. As to this dreadful story, I don’t believe one single word of it. *She* is a fool, and some day I shall tell her so.

‘Tell Lionel that he is not to come here to die, but to live.

‘MADELEINE HOWARD.’

Brother and sister passed into the Grange Garden, and the doors were shut upon both of them. They found such peace as was possible for them.

CHAPTER VI.

FARMER JOYCE SEES THE GHOST.

WHAT odd ideas we get about people when we try to classify them according to their outward appearance, or even to their inward thoughts! Take women, for example,—a rather large subject to undertake. A man we knew at one time had once something to do with woman's suffrage, and with the medical education of woman. Journals at that time were going on about both questions, but most of them in the same style. 'Women do not want this,' 'no woman would stand that,' and so on, laying down the law. As if they knew anything

about it! As if women were all alike! My cynical friend was once in a drawing-room in a certain capital. A young lady at one end of the room told him that if she was ill she would never trust a *woman*. The mother of a young lady told him at the other end of the room that her daughter had suffered terrible evils because she would not allow a *man* to come near her. 'Women are not all alike,' he says, 'any more than men are.' To write that 'woman is this,' and 'woman is that,' was, he says, in his humble opinion, nonsense. 'Women have their idiosyncrasies, and Shakespeare knew it. Shakespeare knew that, though Ben Jonson, in his hideous misogynism, did not.'

'It is entirely the same,' says my friend, 'with other sections of society. It seems that popular typical classifications are generally wrong. A great Radical leader,'

he continues, ‘at this time is an exceedingly quiet, well-dressed young man, who never contradicts you, and never loses his temper. A great leader of the High Church party, who might be a furious fanatic, is one of the most quiet and moderate of men. A great leader of the Low Church party would say to-morrow that the present Pope was an amiable gentleman, but had no more sense in his head than his own colley dog which is lying at his feet. A certain great Scotchman,’ he goes on to remark, ‘is public property; and though a Presbyterian leader, keeps race-horses, though he will not bet. Yet, no one in Scotland,’ my cynical friend says, ‘whether Established, Free, or U.P., is particularly angry with him on this score: they are rather proud of him for beating the English. The Scotch clergy are, with the exception of the

English, the most highly educated in Christendom (and it is a question whether taken at the *average* they are not more highly educated). Still they can give and take, and they get on very well together. How are they classified by the ignorant in England? As a mere set of sour-headed puritans.

‘Now to drop suddenly,’ my cynical friend continues, ‘from the Scotch Church to the Irish Roman Catholic Church. The Scotch Church is on the average the most highly educated, the Irish the worst educated. The Irish priests are sometimes classified as being fomenters of sedition : is that frankly the case? The Irish priest of Charles Lever is the type we have of him ; but he is nothing of the kind. The Irish priest has a great deal on his hands, and, according to his knowledge, he does it in

the main well. He has not the terrible power of the Scotch priest—I beg pardon, I see that you are offended—minister; because excommunication in Ireland may be laughed at, in Scotland it is social death. The Irish priest has to persuade, and he does it. The majority of English believe him to be a poor Pope-ridden fellow. The Irish priests have saved Ireland for us, as they would say, “anyhow.” If they had been the stupid and disloyal scoundrels which some people choose to call them, there would have been as bad a mess in Ireland in 1866 as there was in India in 1857; but we classify them all together.’

‘But,’ my friend says, ‘the most ill-used people of all others who are in this way classified together, like women, Anglicans, Calvinists, and Romanists, are most certainly country gentlemen.’ ‘I,’ he says, ‘have lived

much in the country' (he lives more in other countries than his own now), 'and pretend to know something about them. To the world they are generally supposed to be fat, loud men, always just under sixty, with a blue coat and brass buttons. I never but once saw this man, and he is dead. The breed has died out, I fear.'

Certainly Squire Wotherston was nothing of this kind. He was a rather thin man, not much past thirty, who had then to use a stick to walk with ; and one day he left his carriage in a lane not far from the Grange, and walked away.

He did not go to the front door ; he went down the narrow lane, which was not safe after nightfall, knocked at the dreadful closed door, and was at once admitted by the ghost.

He was not long in there : he came back

to his carriage directly. ‘Catch the two o’clock train, James,’ he said. ‘I shall be in time for the division.’

He was our Liberal member, and was very dearly beloved in the county by both parties. We should have liked him to speak more in the House, but what he said was very much listened to. He could speak very well; and whenever the Chancellor of the Exchequer made any statement of any sort or kind, there was our little member ready for him, without one solitary paper,—not even in his hat. No Chancellor of the Exchequer could stand against him. On one occasion the Chancellor got his papers in bad order; our member at once put him right out of his own head, though our party was then in opposition. We knew that our member would make his mark in the world, though he was at that time lame, and could

only limp to a pony carriage when he wished to go out. My cynical friend remarked that no one would have taken him for a country gentleman.

He was the only man who had the *entrée* to the Grange Garden; he always went by the back door, and generally drove away to the station at once, and went to London. It was obvious, however, that there was something very attractive to detain him.

One day Farmer Joyce, the devout 'ghost' man, was passing the dangerous back gate, when he heard voices inside. Self-preservation dictated flight, because, although it was broad daylight, no sensible man would ever play the fool with a ghost, or possibly worse. He at once got through the hedge, and was so scratched that he almost wished he were a ghost himself.

The door was opened: no ghost was

there,—only Lady Madeleine, Lady Alice, and the county member, Squire Wotherston. He kissed them both, which was possibly indiscreet ; and the Squire said,

‘My dears, we will cautiously get to the root of it. Trust me as a shrewd man.’

‘Do you believe it?’ said Lady Alice.

‘The proof is overpowering, but it is a devilish lie for all that. Does he believe it?’

‘Not now I think. He did at first.’

‘Lead me to the end of the lane,’ said Squire Wotherston, and they went with him, leaving the gate open.

Then Farmer Joyce looked into the garden, and saw the ghost for himself.

The whole area of the garden was blazing with sunlight ; the parterres of flowers formed a mass of colour which dazzled the eye, while the whole of the scene was set out more brightly by the shadow of

the cedars which stood close to the wall. Close inside the wall was the basin of clear water flashing and sparkling, partly in the sunlight, and partly in the shade of the cedars. The brightest spot in all the garden was immediately behind the basin, where there was a bed of geraniums and calceolarias, which came down to the edge of the stone.

It was the most beautiful sight he had ever seen in his life; yet his flesh crept as he looked on it.

At the edge of the basin was a ghastly figure in awful black, with the feet bare, and the face concealed by a large hood, through which were pierced two holes for the eyes, which were edged with white. The awful figure seemed to blast the garden as it stood there with its trembling reflections on the shivering water beneath it. The farmer had seen enough, and fled.

Had he travelled much, he would have known that he had only seen a monk of the Order of the Broken Heart—that order which allows those brethren who are unable to go through extreme monastic discipline to live with their friends under weekly inspection.

He had seen enough to frighten him. Only Mrs. Morgan had seen a little more.

CHAPTER VII.

LIONEL AND CLARA MEET.

THE early life of Lionel and Clara had been a singularly unhappy one, though splendid enough as far as this world's goods went. They had never known a want in one way ; that is to say, they had everything which money could buy, and yet they had wanted everything which could make life happy—domestic love, fatherly and motherly care—nay, it was only by the strenuous tongue of Lady Madeleine Howard that Clara at all events had got education.

Lionel was a very high-spirited lad when

he was sent to Harrow, and he fell in with a very good set there, the chief of whom was James Wotherston, who gave the tone to his friends, among whom he esteemed Lionel Branscombe above all, and over whom he exercised a great influence for good.

It was very well that they were thrown together, for it is highly improbable that any other human hand would have been held out to save him. His home was unutterably hateful to him; his father and his mother were at continual variance. She did not care for him, and his father as he thought positively disliked him. Mr. Branscombe was an extremely violent man, and his wife was a pettish and stupid woman. The whole house was under the domination of the eldest son, who used to quarrel continually with his second brother, and

neglected his third. The house, besides, was not a reputable one; and in spite of Mr. Branscombe's vast wealth, was not much frequented by the best people. There were some very queer stories about the place, and it was strongly believed that Lady Mary Branscombe had cause for her continued ill-temper on the ground of personal violence.

Shortly after Lionel went to Harrow, he was informed (by the steward who sent him his most liberal allowance, for Mr. Branscombe was never niggardly with his money) that he had a sister born. He seldom went home in his holidays, being very popular among the families of other boys; and on all occasions when he did, his little sister was either still secluded in the nursery, or, latterly, away with her mother, who lived now almost entirely apart from Mr. Branscombe, who was getting unbearable. He,

therefore, knew nothing whatever about her, until, after he had been six years at Harrow, he was summoned home to the hall to attend his mother's funeral.

He felt grief at her death, of course, though she had neglected him; but he would have been glad to come to the funeral without entering his father's house. The steward asked him not to see his father, and he acquiesced with a sigh. He dined with his brothers the day of his arrival, and they quarrelled and swore at one another, taking but little notice of him. His eldest brother drank a great deal of wine, and the second told him brutally that he was glad to see him do it, for the sooner he killed himself with it the better he should be pleased. After the refined and intellectual conversation to which Lionel had been used at Harrow, he left the room with something

like a horror against his own flesh and blood.

He went into the garden among the flowers, and distracted his mind by admiring them. The garden was a Watteau garden, divided into flowering alleys by tall, close-clipped hedges of yew, and the flowers stood out in front of this background in various heights and of innumerable colours. It was a beautiful thing to him to walk from alley to alley amidst these splendid flowers, and distract his mind from the death-possessed and disgraced house which he had left. He had almost forgotten everything, and was back with his friends at Harrow again, when turning into an alley more beautiful than all the others, two black figures stood before him.

A chill went through his heart. The thing looked so dreadfully unlucky and un-

canny. He thought for a moment of the horrible black ghost in 'Zanoni,' which appeared in the bright sunshine, but he never thought that he himself was to become a ghost more hideous to passers-by than that which Lord Lytton created.

He had not long to think about matters ; he saw that the two black figures were those of a sour-faced lady and a very little girl, and he heard the lady say, in a grating voice,—

‘Clara, go and kiss your brother.’

Her idea of a brother had been a creature who swore at you, told you to get out of the way, called you a tiresome little wretch, and so on. Once she had heard her second brother say to the eldest, ‘I wish that child was dead ; the governor does not care for her, but he will leave her twenty thousand.’ She had a shrewd notion, young

as she was, that her two brothers hated her ; here was a third.

Lionel saw the child advance towards him, pale and frightened, but looking resolutely at him. As she came nearer he saw her face change from an expression of fear to one of wonder and surprise. Clara saw that this brother was different to her other brothers, and in her child's mind, sharpened as it was by cruelty and neglect, she began to see that all men need not be like her two brothers. This new brother was a fine, fresh-coloured, bright-eyed youth of eighteen, who looked upon her with tender curiosity. Her face brightened into a smile, the first time for many days, and she ran towards him with her arms extended.

He caught her up, and covered her face with kisses, saying, 'My darling little sister, let us love one another.'

It was the first time in all her neglected existence that Clara had been kissed for love.

Lionel and Clara went to the funeral together. Lionel found that the child was so utterly ignorant that she knew nothing of a future state at all. Lionel explained to her that their mother was now free from all the troubles of this wicked world, and was gone away to be an angel in heaven. She enquired about angels, and when he described them she shook her head dolefully, and said her mother would never like it, and would be sure to come back again, a prospect which the poor illtreated little heathen seemed to regard with something like terror.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE LAST DAYS AT POLLINGTON.

LIONEL had done splendidly at Harrow; better indeed than Wotherston, who had not had such brilliant talents, though far more influence over others. After the funeral Lionel had a short interview with his father, and informed him that he had gained in competition an open scholarship at a great college in Cambridge, and wished to proceed there.

‘I’ve heard of it, sir!’ said Mr. Branscombe angrily. ‘Your head master has written to me about it. You have degraded

your family. You are going to eat the bread of charity.'

'I am very sorry if I have displeased you, sir; but my papers were much the best, and I could not decline the honour.'

'*Honour!*' shouted the terrible old man. 'You are the first of your family who has ever taken up with that system of sapping, studying, grinding, or whatever you call it in your school slang. And I know all about your associates, sir.'

'Speaking humbly to you, sir, they have been eminently respectable.'

'My family never was respectable, sir,' said the old man, knowing what he meant, but expressing it wrongly. 'I hate respectable people. Tullevant, the banker, was a most respectable man, but he dropped me down for fifteen thousand. You have been consorting with young Wotherston and his

gang. Why that man's father, with twelve thousand a year, was converted, and took holy orders at thirty-two. He presented himself to his own worst living, one of 50*l.* a year, and died when he was forty-three, from a fever caught in attending some poor people. And as far as I can hear, his precious son is following in his father's footsteps.'

'I am afraid he is, sir.'

'Well, boy, I won't quarrel with you. You are a handsome boy, and may earn a reputation. Come here and let me look at you.'

Lionel knelt down between his father's knees. The old man looked at him fixedly. Lionel used to say that he hoped he would have kissed him; but nothing of the kind took place. Mr. Branscombe only pushed him away after a time, and whatever grain of tenderness towards him was concealed in that heart was buried in the grave.

Still he was gentler than usual. He said,—

‘You will never want for money, boy. Take that money for the scholarship, but give it in charity. I will provide for you amply. Go.’

Lionel never saw much of his father again. He went to Cambridge at the same time as James Wotherston. He found a credit there of 200*l.*, and received a letter from the steward, Mr. Gordon, informing him that he was to have an allowance of 500*l.* a year.

He wrote a most respectful letter to his father; and in thanking him for his generosity, Lionel dared to hope that he would have his sister Clara educated; but he got no answer, and could not satisfy himself that anything of the kind was being done.

Lionel had met Lady Madeleine Howard,

his mother's sister, but much younger than his mother. She was plain, poor, and not popular; but he liked her more and more as he became better acquainted with her. She was an outspoken woman, but gentle and kind to those whom she loved, and she loved him from the first. He determined to take her into his confidence, and consult her on the subject; she said nothing, except that she would write to her brother-in-law.

The letter must have been a pretty vigorous one; for although not the ghost of an answer was returned to it, Clara was most promptly sent to school.

After Lady Mary Branscombe's death, a boy of his own age was met by him in his father's house, for whom he conceived a very strong personal regard. The elder brothers regarded this boy with the most violent dislike. On Lionel's last visit to Pollington, he

enquired of the old butler for him, and was told that the young gentleman had led the old one such a life about him, that he was glad to compound for peace by sending Robert Struan to Australia. Lionel wondered very much at this : the servants did not : they had remarked the very singular likeness between Robert Struan and Lionel, and like the brothers had formed their own conclusions. Robert Struan disappeared for many a long day ; and was but dimly heard of by the family for a time as one who was doing well, and then was totally forgotten by all but Lionel.

CHAPTER IX.

BROTHER AND SISTER.

IN all the various disputes which Mr. Branscombe had with his family, he had always respected plain Lady Madeleine. He sent for her on his death-bed, and she went promptly to him. He requested to be left alone with her, and every one else retired. In twenty minutes she came to the door very quietly, and said, ‘Your master is dead; you had better send at once for Mr. Arthur.’ In the confusion which followed it was discovered that Lady Madeleine had coolly driven away, and had no apparent intention

of coming back. If the old man told her anything, she certainly kept her own counsel.

Lionel was left extremely well off by his strange old father,—so well that his brothers grumbled. He went on from one success to another, until he found himself at twenty-eight in Parliament, and in a junior office. He had married his distant cousin, Edith, young, beautiful, and penniless. They had but one child, the one which died;—how much better had it never been born!

Clara, growing in every grace, accomplishment, and virtue, had come to live with them. There were not three happier people in England than they were during Clara's first season. Then the crash came; and the rich, elegant, successful Lionel Branscombe became the ruin of humanity which was carried into Grange Garden, and the world saw him no more.

Clara fled the world with him, as we have seen ; her beauty gone in a few days, and only a look of hopeless terror on her face, which did not pass away for years. Before Lionel left Brussels, he had entered the Order of the Broken Heart, for seven years' probation, not so much from any sudden change of religious conviction, but in simple despair. He was merely saved from entering a more severe Order by the accident of the other one getting hold of him first.

He would have had his sister go into a nunnery, but she had her wits about her, and thought that her duty lay with the first person who had ever been kind to her. She appealed to Lady Madeleine, now in her tenth year of seclusion, and the appeal was not in vain

At first Clara told her kind hostesses that

she was afraid her mind would go, for the ghost of the child was always before her ; it is possible that in the cloister she might have become a confirmed hypochondriac, but her duties were so incessant, and the two good ladies were so kind, that she preserved the balance of her intellect, and got quietly contented, though nothing would ever induce her to show her face to the world. The existence of both brother and sister was so carefully kept secret in that lonely and primitive neighbourhood, that the story of the ghosts got about, and was purposely encouraged by the ladies and Mr. Wotherston, Lionel's old friend at Harrow. Farmer Joyce assisted in the delusion ; for whenever any outsider questioned the existence of the ghost, he would stop them by saying,—

‘ I tell you that I looked into that garden, and I sin un myself standing up among the

flowers in the sunshine; and it was as black from head to foot as the devil, and had eyes like saucers, with a white rim round 'em, and that I'd swear on the book.'

Mrs. Morgan was the only other person who had seen the ghost; what had happened to her was simply this, Lady Madeleine had taken her into the garden, firmly believing that Lionel was asleep upstairs: he had got restless, and had gone out into the garden in the sun, with his hood off, and was walking there. Lady Madeleine suddenly caught Mrs. Morgan by the arm, and pulled her behind a yew hedge while Lionel passed within three feet of them bare-headed. Mrs. Morgan had seen quite enough; and though little by little the truth leaked out to her husband, it never went any further, and Lionel never had the remotest idea of her presence. This happened in the first year

of Lionel's seclusion, and after that no other strangers were admitted into the garden.

If you are not too much frightened, perhaps you will step in with me and see the ghost yourself.

CHAPTER X.

LIONEL SHOWS HIS FACE TO WOTHERSTON.

It happened in the fourth year of Lionel's seclusion that Mr. Wotherston came tearing down from town by the express, and not finding his carriage at Pulverbach, took a fly, and ordered the driver to go straight to Weston. There was some great news, the people about the station said, for the squire was in such a mortal hurry.

Wotherston pitched himself into the fly, and his valet packed him in with papers and blue books enough to prevent his being hurt if the fly were overturned. He told the man

to drive fast, and the man obeyed his orders, for Squire Wotherston was a good man to drive, being free with his money. When they got to Weston, the valet said, ‘To the Grange,’ and very soon the fly was pulled up before the door of that ghostly establishment.

Mr. Wotherston said to his valet, ‘Wait here, and be ready to bring all these papers in : we shall want them all.’

He rang at the door in the wall, not the door through which Farmer Joyce saw the ghost, but the front entrance, in another road. Few were ever admitted beyond that door for the last three years ; but when it was cautiously opened to Wotherston, he stepped in, and the fly-man and the valet saw a glimpse of a small flower-garden neatly kept, and the old Grange lying dark at the other end of it.

Mr. Wotherston ran quickly as he was able up to the front door, the old woman, who had opened the gate to him, following as fast as she could. He went into the drawing-room, but found no one there, and the old woman overtook him.

‘They be all out, Squire—all out,’ she said; ‘why didn’t you come by the postern?’

‘Because I was in a hurry, Martha,’ he said. ‘I want to see Mr. Lionel immediately.’

‘He be in his room, sir,’ she said; ‘you know the way by this time.’

‘I know,’ said James Wotherston. ‘But do you mean to say that Miss Clara has gone out?’

‘No; she’s a-bed. Sat up half the night with him writing. It is only the ladies as is gone out.’

‘I’ll go up to his room by myself, then,’ said the Squire, and took his way accordingly.

The old oak stairs were very broad and silent, with deep-piled carpets : at the top of the stairs was a large gallery or landing, which the astounding taste of a previous occupant had decorated with glass cases full of stuffed birds, and animals, without the protection of a glass case, such as deer and others, staggering insanely about, with glass eyes devoid of all speculation.

‘This landing ought to be made the purgatory of sportsmen,’ thought Wotherston ; but he was anxious, and opened the broad oak door before him without knocking.

A large room, piled with books on shelves and on the floor, was before him. In a mul-lioned window at the other end of the room sat a man with his back towards Wotherston, writing busily ; between him and the man in the window lay a black dress thrown on the floor. James Wotherston paused and

shuddered. He was going to see his handsome old schoolfellow in his horrible ruin. He had met him often and for long 'hours together in the religious dress which hid his deformity ; now he was going to see him for the first time without it ; but he never flinched.

‘ Lionel, my boy, is that you ? ’ he said.

Lionel was forced to turn towards James Wotherston at last. He merely said ‘ Yes,’ and faced his old friend the first time for four years. Lionel expected to see a look of horror and repugnance come over Wotherston’s face : nothing of the kind occurred ; James Wotherston was too leal and trusty a soul to show what he felt at the present ruin of his old friend’s beauty : he gave him no time to think : he held out his hands towards him, and cried out excitedly, ‘ Victory, victory, dear old fellow ! Majority

of thirty, and all your doing. I gave your argument to ——, and he used it bravely; then I came in with my own statistics (and yours), and the end of it was that we had eighteen Tories with us; say “Hurrah!”

‘Not I,’ said Lionel; ‘the Lords will reverse your decision.’

‘Hang the Lords!’ said the irreverent Wotherston. ‘I have come to consult you about that. Where is Vacher? Let us go through them all together. Ah! here is the book; let us sit down, and let me put my arm round your neck, as I used to do at Harrow.’

‘But, James—do you feel no repugnance to me?’

‘I did to the dress you have worn, certainly,’ said Wotherston; ‘it made you look like the devil; but now I have caught you without it, you’re my own old boy again.’

Let's begin at the A's : Arundel, he won't go with us ; cross him.'

' But, James, tell me—am I not horribly hideous? '

' Most assuredly not : you are not so handsome as you were at one time, but you speak perfectly plain, and your brain is sharper than ever. I hope that this will be a warning to you about duelling, Lionel. A scoundrel is as good as an honest man at that work.'

' I was utterly mad. He comes to me at night with the child in his arms.'

' He will not come long ; come to the light with me, my boy, and let me see what that fellow did to you.'

It was easily seen. A piece of the right lower lip had been carried away, and the teeth were showing ; the sight was not so terrible as it had been when Mrs. Morgan saw him, but it was bad still.

‘And about the other wound,’ said Wotherston; ‘you have only hinted at that to me.’

‘He put his first bullet into my thigh,’ said Lionel. ‘That will trouble me very little.’

James Wotherston passed his hand gently several times over his friend’s face.

‘You are very smooth,’ he said; ‘why do you shave?’

‘It is one of the rules of our order,’ said Lionel.

‘I see,’ said Wotherston; ‘you must be kept aware of your affliction every time you see a looking-glass. I’ll go bail they supply that article. But this is not business: my time is short: let’s get through the House of Lords together.’

And so they began, and they were a long time at it. If my Lords had heard

themselves discussed by a monk and a Liberal member, they would have thought very little of themselves, but monks and Liberal members may err like the rest of us. Lionel and Wotherston were in hot secular debate over one spiritual lord, Lionel arguing that he could be trusted, and the atrocious Wotherston saying he was a rat, when both of them became aware of a presence in the room. James Wotherston suddenly remembered the ghost, and, forgetting that he was lame, jumped up and at once fell down; he was assisted to his legs by Clara.

CHAPTER XI.

WOTHERSTON'S RESOLUTION.

‘THIS is so good of you,’ she said. ‘He has often said you made a man of him once ; perhaps you may do so a second time.’

‘My dear ghost,’ said Wotherston, ‘you have alarmed me.’

‘That is the effect of your evil conscience,’ said Clara.

She was still beautiful, though her pallor was excessive, and the wan terrified look was more strongly on her face than ever, and her nerve was evidently not good ; for when Wotherston accidentally threw down

the chair which he was offering to her, she started and jerked up her hands. He marked this and many other things, one of which was that during his stay Lionel made no offer to conceal his features in his monastic dress.

‘What have you two been talking about?’ she asked.

‘We have been abusing the House of Lords,’ said Wotherston.

‘A pretty pair you would be without them,’ she replied. ‘Foolish people like Lionel and yourself require a House of Lords to keep you in order. I am a violent Conservative and am always quarrelling with my brother on the subject of politics.’

‘You are a violent Radical,’ said Lionel; and he began to laugh.

It was not as yet agreeable to see him laugh.

‘Are you coming?’ said Clara to James Wotherston.

‘Whither?’

‘Did I not tell you—no, by-the-bye I did not—Lady Madeleine wants to see you.’

‘Well then, good-bye, Lionel. I will come again to-morrow.’

So he went out into the garden with Clara. When they were alone together, she began suddenly—

‘Did you find him without his dress, or did he take it off before you?’

‘I found him without it,’ said Wotherston.

‘Well, thank God the ice is broken at last! Did you flinch when you saw him?’

‘I was shocked, but I did not show it.’

‘Good. Is it irremediable?’

‘You mean his personal appearance?’

‘Yes.’

‘Certainly not. You can’t give him a new lip ; but if they allowed him to grow his beard, no one could see it. It is not half so bad as I expected. But tell me : will he keep to his monastic vows—has he made any attempt to bring her to reason?’

‘I can’t say, James ; he never speaks about it. The priest comes here and goes away again once a week ; further than that I know nothing whatever.’

‘Why on earth did he leave our Church so suddenly?’

‘Despair, nothing else,’ she replied. ‘Now, James, I have something very serious to tell you, and I need not say that it must not pass your lips. It is a dreadful thing to say.’

‘Well, Clara—you can surely trust me.’

‘In spite of his asceticism, in spite of his religious observances, he never repented his intention to kill the man who made

the mischief if he can find him. What he tells the priest I know not, but he tells me he would do the same thing again : he says that honest, innocent, and gallant Russians are being killed every day in fair fight, and that he does not see that he has done any harm trying to rid the world of a monster. His remorse at having killed the wrong man is unceasing, but if he could get hold of the real one he would kill him to-morrow, and he says that he is right.'

'I can understand it, Clara,' said Wotherston promptly.

'I can't bear to hear him speak so. I wish he was sorry for the man ; but his heart is like iron about it ; he will go to his grave unrepenting, and then ——'

'And then what?' said James Wotherston calmly. 'I tell you that he will outlive all this.'

Clara did not reply, and there was silence for a few minutes.

‘Clara,’ said James Wotherston after a time, ‘I am going to approach a subject again of which you once forbade me to speak.’

‘You will only get the same answer, James. You know well that I love you, but that I will neither leave my brother, whom next to you I love best in the world ; nor will I marry you until the truth is proved. I have really nothing more to say.’

‘But if the lie could be disproved?’

‘Then, if you still loved this poor wreck of what was once a woman, I would fly to your bosom, and nestle there until I died.’

‘But why not come now, Clara? How much better we could care for him together than apart!’

‘He, had I no scruples, would never permit it,’ said Clara.

‘Lady Madeleine says that he has ceased to believe in it.’

‘In the daytime yes, to a certain extent. But at night—can you hear me whisper?—he believes it as strongly as ever, and then——Oh, James! James! I hope I shall not go mad after all.’

‘But do you believe in it, my darling?’

‘What hope is there in disbelief? I have accepted my fate, but I fear he has not.’

‘Is he morose?’

‘Not to me; in his worst fits of anger he is kind to me.’

‘Thank God for that. I can tell you, Clara, what you well know yourself, that he is more interested in the world and in politics than ever.’

‘Yes; and on the whole I am glad of

it. Though he chafes like a caged lion, yet he feels that he has you for his ——’

‘Mouthpiece,’ said James Wotherston, laughing.

‘Well, I could not have said it,’ said Clara.

‘I can, however. I perfectly acknowledge it. His abilities are far greater than my own: I am proud of my pupil, who I hope will one day be my brother. Whenever I make a hit in the House, I am always amused by thinking that the words I utter are not practically mine, but those of a solitary monk.’

‘The world has utterly forgotten him, I suppose?’ said Clara.

‘Completely. His old friend and mine, Lord Sandrey, alluded to him the other day, and said that his death was a great loss to the party. I did not undeceive him.’

‘Have you seen or heard anything of our brothers?’ said Clara.

‘They seem to have subsided into chronic blackguardism—that is all I know about them.’

‘Is either of them married?’

‘Oh, no; I should say that was the last thing which could happen to either of them. Here are Lady Madeleine and Lady Alice; let us go to them.’

Although time had passed lightly over these two ladies for many years, their anxiety about the presence of Lionel and Clara had aged them a little, and the square-faced Lady Alice was getting rather gray, while Lady Madeleine was more so. They were both dressed in blue suits of Welsh flannel, with aprons; one carried a hoe, the other an enormous mass of cut flowers and a knife; both were bare-headed, it being a

cloudy day, and it seemed strange to James Wotherston that these two sunburnt and very plain women came of two families so singularly remarkable for beauty.

They had certainly none of the famous beauty of the main branches of the families to which they were only distantly related: Norfolk and Oranmore would scarcely have acknowledged them, yet they had in James Wotherston's eyes a beauty of their own. There was a calm, good-humoured self-possession about them, which was reflected upon their faces: he thought, 'Shall I ever see that look of peace upon Clara's face? It shall not be my fault if I do not.'

'Well, you two,' began Lady Alice, 'and what have you been talking about? Madeleine and I have been quarrelling as usual. Madeleine is getting old and foolish, and I am afraid that we must dissolve partnership.'

What is to be said of the intellect of a woman who proposes to leave strawberries after the fourth year ? ’

‘ And you said,’ replied Lady Madeleine, ‘ that you wanted the five-acre pasture broken up ; so there are, at all events, a pair of us. Clara, my love, have you been crying ? ’

‘ I have had no such happiness,’ said Clara. ‘ I have been telling James about Lionel.’

‘ And he has been asking you to leave us, and go away with him ? ’

‘ Yes.’

‘ And you have said no ? ’

‘ I have given him the old answer.’

‘ Well ! well ! ’ said Lady Alice, taking up the conversation, ‘ you are neither of you too old to wait until this falsehood is cleared. Leave her with us a little

longer, James, for we have got to love her 'dearly.'

He took one kiss in the presence of the ladies, and then he passed out into the lane, through the door which could only be opened from within; before he closed the door behind him he looked back. Lionel had come out and joined the three ladies; they were talking eagerly together, and he guessed of what they were talking. Lionel was telling them that he had been seen by his old friend for the first time, and Lady Alice and Lady Madeleine had their arms round Clara's neck. He heard them laughing, as he held the door ajar; and he being a man without a grain of selfishness in his disposition, said,—

‘Should I be justified in removing her from her asylum? She has faced her troubles there, and if I persuaded her to

come away with me now, it might kill him, and it would possibly make her no happier. She shall stay where she is, as far as I am concerned, for the present. I will go my own way to work, but I will win her to my home.'

CHAPTER XII.

THE GHOSTS GET TROUBLESOME.

LADY MADELEINE HOWARD and Lady Alice Browne were so entirely united as regards all things in this world, that it might be at first supposed they were united in all things as regarded the next. By no means. Lady Madeleine, true to the traditions of her family, was an extremely strong Roman Catholic. Lady Alice, on the other hand, was a Protestant, and an Orange woman to the backbone. Both women were entirely in earnest, and would argue to any extent ; but they never quarrelled. The fact of the matter was that they were both Christians,

and that the mere details of their creed sat very lightly upon them.

In these days of Pio-Nono-Falck-Gladstone-Capelism, such a fact is difficult of belief; but we are old enough to remember the time when there was no Pio Nono, few pilgrimages, and no miracles. In those times a priest was one of the most respected of men in the extremely Protestant county of Dorset, and that county felt itself rather honoured than otherwise by the presence of a real Cardinal at Lulworth, representing one of its oldest families.

Lady Alice Browne theoretically believed that the Pope was Antichrist, and also, on the other hand, that the salvation of dissenters was extremely problematical. Practically, however, she thought there was mercy enough in heaven to save Lady Madeleine from eternal perdition. The Welsh Rector

whom she occasionally saw in her walks was decidedly of opinion that Roman Catholics could not be saved, and urged on her the conversion of Lady Madeleine Howard. She advised him to try it himself: he thought discretion the best part of valour; and when he met that lady, bowed to her with the air of one who was sorry for her, and thought her worthy of a better fate than that which undoubtedly awaited her.

Lady Madeleine, on the other hand, theoretically believed in the infallibility of the Pope, though at times she called him an old noodle, and wondered where his wits had gone (this was in 1848). Her Vaticanism was of the vaguest kind, and we fear is still; her pet objection just now is to the Old Catholics, however, about which set of gentlemen she has exhausted her vocabulary of vituperation; she says that whoever is

right, *they* at all events have no legs to stand on. By which strenuous opinion, continuously expressed, she gets on better than formerly with her director, Father Wilson—who is not now quite so rigid when she calls the Pope a noodle, and says that Lady Alice Browne will be saved without accepting the Roman formulas. She says always now, ‘I am a Catholic; neither a Roman Catholic nor an Old Catholic; but simply a Catholic,—whereby she is in some people’s black-books.

They were pretty busy all day; for indeed they undertook so much with their small dairy farm, their cultivation farm, and their garden, that the time never hung heavy on their hands; added to these duties there were very liberal charities, to which they always attended themselves. They in fact had never much conversation together

before supper-time, for it is wonderful what an amount of useful work women can make for themselves if they choose. At supper-time they compared notes about the day's work and occurrences.

They were always alone at this time, for Lionel and Clara took supper together in his room,—a rule made by the two ladies, and which never was departed from.

They had supper in the little dining-room, which opened on one side to the kitchen, on the other side to the hall where the grand staircase was. One night in winter, after all the events of which we have spoken had taken place, Martha was gone upstairs to attend to the brother and sister, with orders to go to bed without reappearing, and the room was empty, although the cloth was laid for two people with an amount of silver, china, and flowers fit for a grand party.

Entered Lady Alice from the kitchen, with two hot plates in a snow-white glass-cloth. She wiped them carefully, lest they, having been heated in the oven, should soil the table-cloth. She burnt her fingers, and exclaimed, ‘Bad cess to ye, for riband gallow-glasses;’ for she could talk her native language at times, as the washer-woman (a Westmeath lady, married ‘on’ an English carpenter) well knew.

‘Madeleine!’ she cried out; but no answer came. ‘Madeleine!’ she cried again, ‘shall I bring in the kidneys? They’ll be as hard as Torquemada’s heart if I leave them in the oven much longer.’

‘Bring them in, Ally,’ said a voice from the bowels of the earth. ‘We must get one of those new patent taps: I have broken the spigot short off.’

I am forced to go on and tell the truth:

the cellar opened out of the dining-room, and Lady Madeleine Howard was in that cellar, drawing the beer—the only beverage, other than milk, which those ladies allowed themselves, and that only at supper. Sometimes they offered some of it to such wandering poor people as came near them; but the tap was not popular: their own pensioners drank it from complaisance sometimes, but the majority of them preferred cash to kind. They gave some of it to Lionel's doctor once, and he remarked that it was wonderful what air and exercise would do for the human constitution.

They, however, thought it as delicious as though they had stolen it, instead of only having brewed it themselves. When Lady Madeleine emerged from the cellar with a large jug of it; when they had both gone down to the cellar in the dark to see that no

spark of fire was left in a stone vault where you might have burnt a faggot pile without danger; and when Lady Alice had brought in the dish of kidneys, these two ladies sat down for their night's dissipation.

‘How are the kidneys, Maddy?’ said Lady Alice.

‘Nearly as good as they could be, my dear,’ said Lady Madeleine. ‘I should put a little more marjoram in the sauce,—at least, I *think* so.’

‘Seriously you would?’ said Lady Alice thoughtfully. ‘I will try it the next time we have them,—though when that will be I don’t know. We can’t afford them.’

‘How much?’ said Lady Madeleine.

‘Eighteenpence.’

‘That man will come to no good,’ said Lady Madeleine. ‘I never liked his eye. He is a swindler.’

‘I don’t go as far as *that*,’ said Lady Alice. ‘He has a large family, and a small business.’

‘True, true,’ said Lady Madeleine. ‘I was hasty. But eighteenpence, my dear!’

‘It’s very sad, of course,’ said Lady Alice; ‘particularly after we gave him the twenty pounds. Still he must live, you know.’

‘For my part,’ resumed Lady Alice, after a pause, ‘I would have anyone in the house sooner than a monk.’

‘That is your Protestantism, my dear. You should come to us, and then you would see the spiritual benefits arising from the arrangement.’

‘Maybe so,’ said Lady Alice; ‘but he is not a monk at all, at all. His heart is in the world. Why did he ever try to come out of it? You have told me but little of his story,

Madeleine, because you said it was too horrible. I wish I knew the truth, for he is a good fellow as ever breathed, and I can't think any great harm of him. Why did his wife go away from him ?'

'Because she was, and is, a mean two-penny-halfpenny jealous and idiotic fool,' was Lady Madeleine's emphatic answer.

'He is a man likely to be kind to his wife,' said Lady Alice.

'Kind ! the best of everything was not too good for her. Alice, a horrible thing happened to Lionel ; he was persuaded that he killed his——' and Lady Madeleine related in a whisper what will be developed in the course of this story most of which the reader knows already. 'Lionel,' concluded Lady Madeleine, 'in hopeless despair of everything, entered the Order of the Broken Heart for seven years. Clara brought him

here : and now, my dear Alice, you know as much as I do.'

'H'm,' said Lady Alice. 'Bring the butter and the cheese with you, my dear, and let us put them in the larder. Are the cats in?'

'I never thought of them.' And she went to the door, and having opened it, began, 'Tibby! Tibby! Tibby! Tit! Pusselly! Couselly! Tib!' But no cat came. *L'amour oblige*. She bolted the door, and left them to their devices; and then turned.

She gave a loud scream, and dropped the candle. Lionel was standing behind her in his horrible monk's dress, perfectly silent; and now that the candle was out, he was there in the darkness, moving, more terrible than ever—a darkness only more thick than the darkness itself. He was in one of his thinking moods, and he did not

take the trouble to speak, but went away to his own rooms.

Lady Madeleine got into Lady Alice's bed that night, bringing her own pillow.

‘I'll have an end of this nonsense,’ she said to that lady. ‘I am not going to be frightened out of my wits by *him*. I believe I have left the front door open.’

So she got out of bed in her night-gown, and went downstairs. Clara, looking after Lionel, saw her in the hall, believed she was a ghost and fainted. The whole house was aroused; but the upshot of the whole thing was that there were too many ghosts at Grange Garden, and that unless they behaved themselves like other people, they must go elsewhere.

CHAPTER XIII.

(*Extract from 'Macwhister's Guide to Gloucestershire.'* Edinburgh : 1860.)

‘—LEAVING the Great London road, we proceed up the beautifully wooded valley of the Wyth to Pollington, pop. 480, charmingly situated by the banks of the river in some of the finest pastoral scenery in England. Close to the village lies the ch., a cruciform structure dating principally from the 11th cent., with a spire (containing a fine peal of bells) of the 12th cent. Observe on the ext. the beautifully moulded gargoyles, and the North porch, said to be a replica of that of Dol in Brittany, which however was

much defaced at the Reformation. The living is a Rec., in the patronage of the lord of the manor: val. 450*l*. There is no accommodation for dissenters in the parish.'

[The excellent compiler might have added that both the late and the present lord of the manor, who owned every stick and stone in that parish, and half the next, would have liked to catch them at it. They were intense Church people, though they never entered the doors.]

'1 m. north of the village stands Pollington Hall, the seat of Arthur Branscombe, Esq., in a deer park of 1,600 acres, sloping generally towards the Wyth, and splendidly timbered. The structure is one of the masterpieces of VANBRUGH;—(probably the most hideous of all his works, only redeemed by being embowered in magnificent elms). 'It consists of a rather low central façade

with two dominating wings, and is approached by a lime avenue 1 m. in length. Visitors are admitted on Tuesdays and Fridays, but only in the absence of the family. Observe in the hall a St. Sebastian by GUERCINO. "The Stag's Death," by SNYDERS. These pictures are undoubtedly genuine, but the rest are extremely doubtful as to originality, though splendid copies. The best pictures are in the various rooms inhabited by the family, and are seldom shown. In the Green room, now used as a billiard-room, there are four undoubted VELASQUEZ, brought from Spain by the late proprietor of the house; they are the only four pictures in the room, and are well worth a journey from London to see. The subjects are—1st, "The Marriage of Don Pedro of Spain to Donna Anne of Braganza" (observe the look of coldness and aversion in the face of the

bride and bridegroom). 2nd, "The Children of Don Pedro," four in number, two heavy-looking coarse-featured sons of seventeen and sixteen, a singularly bright-looking boy of fourteen and a beautiful little girl of four holding flowers. 3rd, "Murder of Don Antonio of Castile (the eldest in the last group) by his father Don Pedro." A figure lying on a bed, with the back of the old man seen going out through a door. 4th, "The Death of Don Pedro." An old man sitting up in bed, and cursing a monk who offers him the consolations of religion. These four almost unequalled specimens were obtained by the last owner of the house at a fabulous price from the Government of Mowney. The rest of the house contains many other art treasures, but they are very difficult to see in consequence of the opposition of the present owner of the house.'

We have preferred to give the description of Pollington, the seat of Arthur, Lionel's eldest brother, from the Guide, for one reason at least which is supreme. The young gentlemen who compose these books (principally, we believe, Scotch), give to one's mind some idea of what they have seen ; whereas some writers give a page or two of 'word painting,' and leave us as wise as ever. It stands to reason that a man who is always describing things should do it practically better than anyone else. Mr. Ruskin knows more, artistically speaking, about shoes than any shoemaker, but you would not give him an order. In the same way the guide-book man tells you exactly what you want to know and leaves the rest to your imagination

Pollington was all that the guide-book said of it, and something more. Old Brans-

combe, who seldom loved anything, loved that place. On what afterwards proved his death-bed the Rector came to him to administer the consolations of religion, and told him that if he repented he would go to Heaven. His reply was, 'I don't want to go to Heaven; I want to stay at Pollington.' The Rector departed low in his mind, but in two days he was fetched back to the old man: too late, as he put it, to do any good. The only words which he got out of the old man were, 'Tell them to take care of Lionel and Clara.' The Rector told them, but they forgot all about it.

At his death, the house fell into the hands of that very sad blackguard Arthur Branscombe, Lionel's eldest brother; and while Lionel was distinguishing himself in the world, before his fiasco, the two elder brothers had dropped out of all recognition

by any one of the county families who had scarcely tolerated the father.

George Branscombe, the second son, was distinctly the more disreputable of the two. He was the spendthrift, Arthur the miser. He soon dissipated every vestige of the somewhat handsome fortune which his father had left him, by gambling on the turf, and then came back to his brother.

And his brother could not turn him out : he was heir-at-law. Arthur could not cut down a tree without his leave, and he wanted to cut some down. Arthur was unmarried, and *dared* not marry ; his lie had been so disreputable, that he was afraid. Objurgations of a certain kind he was used to, but the ideal spectacle of a virtuous woman always in the house, between himself and which woman there would be always a mine of lies which might be exploded at any

moment, was too much for him. He preferred to remain single, and take his brother as a matter of course.

He thought he hated his brother, as his father had hated him ; yet it was extremely doubtful if he did so in reality : he would have got on very well with him if George would have let him, but George's tongue was so abominable that it was impossible to avoid quarrelling with him every day, yet he would not turn him out. Arthur had a sleepy brain, but out of that brain would come singular resolutions, persevered in with curious obstinacy : for example, his father had taught him to drink too much. He found that extreme drinking gave him no pleasure, and consequently he drank no more than he chose, which in these days would be considered a great deal too much : the giving up of excessive drinking was

purely selfish, which was apparently not like everything else which he did.

Arthur liked accumulating money : he never knew what to do with it, but it was almost a madness with him. He had gone so very close to the wind on some occasions in his favourite pursuits that some said that it was wildly possible George might have known something which gave him a hold over him. One thing is certain : even Cross, his confidential friend and adviser, who for purposes of his own wanted the personalty increased, could never induce him to turn out his brother : he was told in the most peremptory manner at last, not to mention the matter any more, and did so.

Arthur was a heavy-looking, handsome man, of large stature and good figure, with a slow-moving eye, and a hesitating, confused way of speaking ; though if you gave

him time, he would always say what he meant. George was shorter and slighter, a 'pretty,' vivacious man, clever, and an excellent talker about nothing at all. He was devotedly religious, never ceasing the cultus of his divinity night or day,—and his god was himself.

Such a pair were these worthy brothers as they played billiards in the Green room one wet autumn afternoon. Let us listen to their conversation.

'What a queer old chap the governor was,' said Arthur. 'Who but he would have bought those pictures? I might get eighteen thousand pounds for them to-morrow.'

'Give me two thou.,' said George, 'and I will give you leave to sell them.'

'I could do that without you,' said Arthur; 'they are not heirlooms.'

‘I say they are,’ said George.

‘I’ll sell them if you say another word, and see who is master. You haven’t got cash to get an injunction.’

George did not pursue the subject. Arthur went on doggedly,

‘Who but the governor would have thought that second son,’—here he pointed with his cue to the family portraits of Don Pedro’s children—‘was like *you?*’ Here he made a long pause, carefully thinking what he should say next, the result of which was, ‘Why that fellow looks like a *gentleman.*’

It was in this way that Arthur used to get the better of his brother. Time was a matter of indifference so long as he could demolish him. In their quarrels he would sit for an hour at a stretch thinking of something disagreeable to say, and when he had

perfected it, would say it. Once, George went to bed in triumph, and was actually asleep for an hour before Arthur had hatched his egg; after the time of incubation, however, Arthur woke him up, and said something that drove him mad; after which, Arthur locked his door and went to sleep.

‘I fancy the governor bought the picture because he thought that the eldest son looked such a thundering cad,’ was George’s vicious reply.

Now there was another reason why Arthur always ultimately got the best of it. He was of a dull nature, and he did not care for his brother’s taunts, whereas every one of his nearly drove George mad. After this last retort, Arthur calmly played on, won the game, and received the money. He always made the virtuous resolution never to gamble with his brother unless assured by ocular

demonstration that George could pay if he lost.

‘You have got a good pile of money there,’ Arthur said slowly, when he had rung every coin on the hearthstone. ‘Who have you been cheating now?’

‘I won two hundred at Gloucester races.’

‘That’s what makes you so bumptious and quarrelsome. I like to see you so, because I know that you are not coming whining to me for money. I like you worst when you are civil, because I know it means money.’

Thick-skinned himself, he was totally unable to understand the *hell* of evil passions which such sayings roused in his brother’s mind. The latent devil burst out now, and George, who was putting up his cue, turned suddenly on him, and said—

‘I shall kill you some day.’

The enormous consequences involved in that assertion were too large for Arthur to take in at once : he put the balls away in silence, locked the chest, and then stood thinking. George was raging to know what he would say when he had thought of it, but saw no good in running away, as the longer he gave him to ponder it over the worse it would be in the end. Arthur was not so long as usual.

‘I say, George, I will give you all this money back on one condition.’

‘That I promise not to kill you,’ sneered George.

‘No,’ said Arthur, sententiously and quietly, ‘I am not afraid of that ; you are too infernal a coward to do that : you have not got the pluck in you to do anything that would hang you, though you are not afraid of horses. What I mean is this : I will give

you back your seven pounds six if you will promise not to quarrel while Cross is here.'

'Will you promise not to exasperate me, then?'

'You take offence at so little,' said Arthur, who in his rhinoceros-like want of sensitiveness actually thought so: 'but I will try not to offend you, brother. I won't even chaff, as I did just now.'

'Then hand over,' said George; 'and see that it is the same cash. I don't want any more bad florins; you just pass them off through your groom in future, not through your brother.'

'Ah, there you are wrong,' said Arthur; 'it's so much easier for a well-dressed man to do it than a servant.'

'Why don't you do it yourself, then?'

'Because I never am well-dressed. I can't afford it: whatever I wore, however,

I always should look like a cad : while you would look well in anything. Lionel and you always looked like gentlemen : the governor and I never did. There is the same cash : I always put my winnings in the same pocket. Talking about Lionel, I wonder where he is : he isn't dead, because he draws his dividends.'

'Do you wish that he were?' said George.

'No ; I don't know that I do. I never cared very much for him, one way or the other. Do you know where he is, and what he is doing?'

'I know where he is, certainly. What he is doing, I know not. He is a hopeless lunatic.'

'He always was,' said Arthur ; 'a fellow who will try scientific experiments on his only child, must be a lunatic. If it had been

his wife, I could understand it : if I had had Lionel's scientific knowledge of drugs, I would have given her two pennyworth of it : enough to prevent her calling me a disreputable blackguard again. But as for the child, why he was very fond of it ; he was a perfect spoony about it, and likely to take the best care of it.'—Pause for several minutes, during which George was for his own reasons silent.—'Why, it stands to reason that he would have taken care of the boy if he had not been mad. You daren't marry, because you know that if you did I should marry too, and cut you out : *I* can't marry, because I will have no one but a lady here, and no lady would have me. All that Lionel must have guessed at, and have known that he and his boy were next in succession. Where is that ill-mannered wife of his ? '

‘She is dead.’

‘Poor thing,’ said Arthur. ‘Well ! well ! she only spoke the truth about me after all. I was only joking when I talked of poisoning her. I ought to write to Lionel congratulating him,—I mean condoling with him—or something of that sort : it is only decent.’

‘As it happened eight years ago, and as Lionel has been Bedlam-mad ever since, I don’t think that it would be much use,’ said George coolly.

‘Do you mean that he is really mad ?’

‘Certainly,—hopelessly lunatic.’

‘How very sad. But how can a lunatic draw dividends ?—and I’ll take my oath he does that.’

‘That is a matter which you, as head of the house, should see into. It is easy enough to get a madman to sign anything. If you

like to see what is virtually your own money, now the wife is dead, going into strange pockets at the rate of sixteen hundred a year, pray please yourself. If you like him to will away the whole of it to his doctor, or his father confessor, or to Clara, without raising your hand, pray do so : only I shan't think you quite as keen a man as I have hitherto.'

This communication took a long time to consider over ; at last Arthur said,

'How long have you known this?'

'Only a very short time.' What he ought to have said was that he had only invented it a very short time.

'Who told you?'

'A friend of mine,—Summerson.'

'Where is Lionel?'

Arthur very seldom asked questions as quick as he did now : it was maddening for

George to invent his lies with such unexpected promptness.

‘He is in some place in Dorsetshire. I can get the name: I have forgotten it.’

‘And where is Clara?’

‘She is with him.’

‘Ah, there you are mistaken. She must have left him. I got a note from her yesterday. She is with Lady Madeleine Howard, at the Grange at Weston.’

‘Does she say anything about Lionel?’

‘Not a word: she never does. Well, we had better look about dinner. Cross will be here directly, and I will talk it over with him.’

George went upstairs swearing: he had done a thing he hated—told a *useless* lie. He knew where Lionel was very well; and for all practical purposes his brother might just as well have known.

CHAPTER XIV.

GABRIEL'S INTELLIGENCE.

ARTHUR, like another famous character, had at one time had most vices except that of hypocrisy : he never denied that he was no better than he should be ; but then he was never ostentatious over the fact, as his brother George was. Arthur accepted the fact of his blackguardism as he accepted a thunderstorm, as a mistake possibly, but an inevitable one. He had a vague idea that if the governor had paid more attention to his education he might have been a better man ; but then he always ended by saying that there never

was any man like the governor. His devotion to 'the governor's' memory had certainly begun with that gentleman's death, for they quarrelled enough during his lifetime; yet the man, stupid as he was, had thought out the relations which might have existed between his father and himself, and now had got to believe that those relations had at one time existed.

They never had: he had created a fictitious father, and as year after year went on he got to worship the memory of one who had in reality never lived. Sometimes, when he and George were at their worst, he would say such a thing as this: 'If my father was alive, he would have kicked you out of the house.' George would reply, 'Our father hated you: he only bought that Spanish picture of Don Pedro murdering his son, because he felt inclined to do it to you.'

But this did not disturb Arthur. He had with his vast strength held the old man up in his arms before the death-struggle, from which he was absent, as we have seen, and Mr. Branscombe had said a few words to him which obliterated all previous unkindness.

‘Try to be a better man than I have made you, and forgive me.’

He never tried at all, but he was left with the general impression that there were worse fellows than the governor, and he worked round at this idea in his dull way, until he came to the conclusion that there never was anyone like the governor. The contents of the governor’s will might have assisted him in this conclusion, but we hope not. The Rector delivered the message about Lionel and Clara; but after three days’ thought, he came to the conclusion that

if Lionel and Clara could not take care of themselves, no two other people could. Lionel and his wife were asked to Pollington after their marriage, and Mrs. Lionel quarrelled with him. Had she stayed in the house twenty-four hours longer, he would have had something dreadful to say to her. She however departed : he, after three days' hammering at his speech to her, was ready, and wrote it down, intending to send it to her by post. But it looked so poor on paper that it was never sent at all ; and Mrs. Lionel had made a rather persistent enemy when she thought she had left a vanquished foe. We have seen how his enmity was appeased by the news of her death. There was a soft side in the man's heart somewhere, but only one man in this world as yet knew how to touch it : that man was Dr. Cross.

When Dr. Cross came to Pollington, both the brothers dressed for dinner; a thing they very seldom did. The best of everything was not good enough for him. George, although in opposition to the head of the family on most points, pretended at this time to like Dr. Cross; and here the two brothers stood in the hall waiting for him. The young footman, Gabriel, who had listened to every word of the conversation in the billiard-room, had gone upstairs while the brothers were dressing, and was looking out of the hall door expectantly—nay, went further than this; he declared that he heard Dr. Cross's fly in the avenue, and ran out in the rain bareheaded to meet it. He disappeared behind one of the trees and then ran back.

‘It is not him, sir,’ he said to Arthur; ‘I thought it was.’ Wherein that young man lied.

The postman appeared shortly afterwards at the back door: he had a few letters to deliver, and a few to take. There was one in his bag of which the household, more particularly the master, knew nothing. It had been written by Gabriel, while the brothers were dressing for dinner, and the address was 'LADY MADELEINE HOWARD, THE GRANGE, WESTON, SALOP.'

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The letter was very simple; it merely warned Lady Madeleine that the brothers were plotting against Lionel's liberty.

CHAPTER XV.

CROSS COMES TO POLLINGTON.

BUT we must not keep Dr. Cross waiting. Here he is in the hall with Arthur and George taking his great-coat, hat, and umbrella, without allowing a servant to approach him. He tolerated these small liberties without making any apology: he never asked favours; if they were given to him he took them as a sign of good sense on the part of the givers, as a small portion of that tribute which the world owed him.

He was a tall man with a very powerful, singular, and intellectual face, in which the

mouth was the most prominent feature ; the face was large and well set together, and as the women said, handsome. Those who knew the Doctor best used to say that you never could tell what the Doctor thought unless you looked at his mouth. Certain it is that he had no expression in any other part of his face. We have seen men who gave expression to their thoughts in the forehead, in the eyebrows, in the eyes, in the flushing of the cheeks, nay even in the case of one young lady in the nose (not that she ever turned it up—that, anatomists will tell you, is a physical impossibility) ; but we never saw a man who, like Dr. Cross, expressed everything by his mouth. A close observer once said that if he grew his beard, he would be as great a puzzle as the Sphinx ; but the Doctor shaved. It was not pro-

fessional to grow a beard, and the Doctor was professional.

He was an unmarried man of forty-five. He was always perfectly dressed; he had a very large practice in certain ways, and was reputed by those who knew nothing of him to be very rich. He did not make many friends except among his scientific acquaintances, for he was high in repute among learned societies, and wrote innumerable letters after his name. One being he was erroneously thought to love, and that one was Arthur Branscombe.

Arthur Branscombe's devotion to him was like that of a dog to his master. The influence which the Doctor had over him was supreme. How that influence was first acquired is no matter; we shall say very little about it; it is more to our purpose to see how it was used.

‘Well, you two,’ he began, warming himself by the fire, ‘how have you been getting on? Have you been quarrelling?’

‘Not more than usual,’ said Arthur.

‘Bad habit: I never do; bickering is an utter mistake. If a man stands in your way, why then it is possible that you may have to tell him that you must pass; but don’t bicker with him: speak him fair, and he will go,—at least ‘it is not your fault if he does not. Now neither of you two stands in the other’s light, because one has stalemated the other: neither of you dares to marry, for instance. Why can’t you live happily together? Arthur, you have behaved generously to your brother when he did not deserve it; why do you always make him feel it? George, why don’t you agree better with your brother’s humours?’

The peacemaker, the arbitrator, was not exactly happy with all his good intentions. When the Emperor William gave the Island of San Juan to the Americans in the cause of peace, there were certain people who set their teeth and swore that, whatever we had, there should be no more arbitration. George felt rather more exasperated than ever : it was taken for granted that he was the sinner. Dr. Cross had of course, good man, not the sense to see this.

Dinner came, and was eaten. The Doctor's conversation was brilliant, far too good for his host to understand : in fact, the Doctor never cared for listeners ; he talked very much to himself. The perpetual round of professional business left him but scant time for scientific thought, and when he got into such company as this he more thought aloud than talked to anyone.

Such a course of proceeding naturally bored George, and at an early hour in the evening he said that he would go out to smoke his pipe in the stables, and see the horses bedded up. The moment he was gone the Doctor produced his cigar-case : having given a cigar to Arthur, he began smoking, and did so without uttering a word. Arthur did the same, and they sat for a time in silence. At last Arthur began :

‘ I am glad you came to-day.’

‘ You are always glad to see me. Why ? Have you been getting into any scrape ?’

‘ Oh no ; I have got into too many ; I don’t want another. It is only that George has been saying something which has astonished me, and I want your opinion about it.’

‘ Well, I will give it you before you tell me what it is. What George has told you

is a parcel of lies. George is as great a liar as Barrère, and he was the greatest who ever lived. What did he say?'

'He says that Lionel is a lunatic.'

'That, singularly enough, is true. Did you not know it?'

'How could I?'

'How could you? You make me impatient. It was your duty to know it.'

'Well, don't scold, Doctor. He says that his wife is dead.'

'Well, that is true also. George is mending.'

'And that he is in the hands of people who draw his money and spend it themselves; that I am his natural guardian, and ought to see into the affair.'

'That is all right enough. Why have you not done so?'

One of Arthur's pauses came on here,

but the Doctor would not help him out of it. It was two minutes before Arthur spoke :

‘I don’t want sixteen hundred a year to go out of the family.’

‘Naturally.’

‘What am I to do?’

‘I don’t know. You have let the thing go so far that you had better let it go on. *I* can’t help you. You have been a fool, and have given up the management of about fifteen thousand pounds, the accumulation of Lionel’s income, deducting his necessary keep, which you might have invested to his benefit, had he ever come by his wits again. You know where he is?’

‘He is somewhere in Hertfordshire, George says.’

‘What a liar he is. He knows perfectly well where he is : he is with Lady Madeleine Howard, at Grange Garden.’

‘With Clara?’

‘Yes, surely. She has never left him.’

‘If, you knew all this,’ said Arthur, ‘why did you not tell me?’

‘Well,’ said the Doctor, ‘I was in the wrong there; but you see, Arthur, that our relations are rather delicate, and I have a difficulty in moving about your affairs.’

‘You saved me, and I have endeavoured to show my gratitude,’ said Arthur.

‘Well, well! both things are true. I will see into the matter for you. You must see yourself that it is a monstrous thing that those two old women should have kept a lunatic in an uncertified house, and spent or laid by all his money. He at all events should be in safe keeping. I will go to the Grange in a few days, and see your brother, with another competent witness. I want to rest here a day or so, for I am over-worked.

Let us have a glass of Maraschino and go into the billiard-room : here are the glasses.'

They had a glass apiece. It was evident that Arthur had been drinking too much, for the Maraschino overpowered him. He in a few minutes fell forward with his head on the table. The Doctor rang the bell.

'Your master is drunk,' he said in a lofty tone to Gabriel. 'Call Mr. George, and take him to bed quietly. Take care that none of the other servants see him in this condition.'

George was called, and assisted his brother to bed most dutifully. He was in such an affectionate mood that he got on to the bed with his brother, and having locked the door, stayed there. Dr. Cross, praising him for his kindness, departed.

As for the young man Gabriel, he got

down his bedding and slept at his master's door, in case of being wanted in the night. He dreamt of a mail-cart on a lonely road, with only one letter inside it, directed in his own handwriting. He dreamt also of Mr. Lionel Branscombe, the gallant young gentleman who had always been kind to him, in the rough savage days of the old Squire; and he dreamt of the gentle Lady Madeleine, and of his own mother, her housekeeper, and his father, her gardener. Then he saw in his dream Lionel in a lunatic cell, chained and fettered—when he woke to see the cold dawn lighting up the corridor, and Dr. Cross looking out of his bedroom door.

CHAPTER XVI.

CROSS GOES TO GRANGE GARDEN.

YEAR after year had gone on, and you would have said, had you only been an occasional visitor, that there had been no change in the Grange Garden. To you, only an occasional visitor, there was none: nay, I will go further than this, and say that if you had gone there for half an hour every day for twenty years, you would have seen no change. I who write see the sun every day (weather permitting), and see no change in it; have never observed any change in it for more years than I care to count; and yet some dreadful Professor tells me in the

‘Times’ some morning that there is a new jet of burning hydrogen, eighty thousand miles long, issuing from it. *I* can’t see the jet of burning hydrogen (which, by the way, presupposes oxygen to make it burn, but this is past our present purpose), but the Professor can. The sun to him is a microcosm, as an ordinary garden is to its owner. If the owner brought that Professor into his garden, he would be unable to see any change between to-day and yesterday; yet the owner could show him that ten of his Orleans plums were ripe against one yesterday, and the diffusion of saccharine matter through an Orleans plum by the sun’s heat is a matter infinitely more wonderful than a new flame of hydrogen on the sun itself.

The reader if he has patience, will soon see my object. The contemplation of what are, we think, very foolishly called small

things, by no means renders the person who contemplates them incapable of bold and splendid actions; and, moreover, the nearer a thing comes to the eye, the larger it 'gets. The microscope reveals more wonders than the telescope; to use an illustration from a book the admiration for which grows steadily on one as time goes on, Mr. Glegg, an ordinary noodle enough, is far higher among his cabbages and peaches than Mrs. Glegg with her telescopic ideas of the glory of the Dodsons. A beehive is a greater wonder than the double nebulae to us on this insignificant little planet Tellus. Lady Madeleine and Lady Alice were by no means incapable of keen thought or decisive action because they counted the radishes and went into one another's bedrooms with enquiries half a dozen times when one of them had been stung by a wasp.

And to people who perpetually contemplate incessant and wondrous small changes, such as one gets in garden or farm, great changes come much more easily than they do to Mrs. Glegg, or her still more superb sister Mrs. Pullet. We have seen our two good ladies, not the cleverest of women, go through one great change without being frightened out of their wits; we have now to follow them through another, in which they had to display considerable resolution and cunning.

It was an exceedingly good apple season, and our two ladies, after a very long haggle, had sold their fruit to a dealer for sixteen pounds, reserving the Golden and Newtown pippins for themselves. It was the first year that they had admitted the dealers with their ladders into the garden and orchard, and it had been necessary for them to be up at daylight to see that nothing of what the

Scottish call ‘spuilzie’ went on. This was the more necessary as the dealer, a man well known to them, declined at first to enter the garden, but after the conclusion of the bargain sent in a convenient gang of gipsies, who were supposed, as heathens, to be proof against the merely Christian ghosts and devils in which the garden was said to abound. These sons of perdition saw nothing the first day, which Lady Madeleine told them was to be attributed to a liberal use of holy water, and Lady Alice to a judicious distribution of violently Protestant tracts. It may be that both causes assisted, in an equal manner, to the general result ; we are not here to judge, simply to narrate. It is perfectly certain, however, that no gipsy saw a ghost ; and the dealer, taking heart of grace, boldly appeared in the garden on the second day, and protected his property in person. The day after the

last apple had been gathered, our two ladies were wonderfully surprised at the cheapness of trout, a large quantity of which they bought from a young man at the door, and potted after the Devonshire manner for winter use. They were the more pleased with their bargain because Lady Alice Browne noticed that no trout were visible in their pond, having all been scared out of it by the young gipsy lad who was discovered scandalously naked at the end of the garden at six o'clock in the morning, and was only forgiven his *fiasco* on the score of cleanliness. 'My dear,' said Lady Madeleine, 'they had better wash themselves in our pond than nowhere.' That the young scoundrel had 'groped' out every trout in the pond, and that his elder brother had sold their own fish to them afterwards, never entered into our two old ladies' minds.

The apple-gathering was over, and the damage in their microcosm had to be repaired. At this they worked very steadily, with the assistance of old Barton, his wife, and a young girl only two days introduced into the family, and given to seeing the devil in the middle of the night, and giving warning on the spot. ‘Give a dog a bad name and hang him,’ is a good adage: it may as well be said of a house. The Grange and its Garden had an evil name, and the little maid was frightened. She wondered how the two ladies could live there, and keep so cool and quiet. There was a resolution behind those two old faces greater than that which has led many a pretty fellow to his death.

The apples being gone, the leaves began to flutter down on to the chilly autumn earth to seek them, and the business in the garden became very heavy. Every clod of earth

was valuable to them, and it was necessary, or seemed so for the first time in many years, to get some help. They wanted the best of the school-girls to come in; but the girls were too wise. Sixpence a day was one thing—a very good thing; but it was more than counterbalanced by the chance (the extreme probability we may say) of seeing Satan. We (and doubtless our readers) would pay a much larger sum for the privilege so emphatically refused by the children of Weston.

No one save the father and mother of Gabriel, the young footman at Pollington, and his young cousin, were there to watch the two old faces, or the look of resolute uncompromising expectancy which was on them. They were raking among the dead apple leaves, not unlike two withered old Ribstone-pippins themselves, when the little

maid came to them in the garden, and gave Lady Madeleine two cards, which she handed to Lady Alice. They at once took off their gardening gloves, folded them up, and went into the house without a word.

Grub as they would in the garden, they had only to take off their gloves and aprons to be ready to appear in the presence of her Majesty. When they entered the dark old sitting-room, there were not two better dressed ladies for *their style* in the kingdom.

Two men rose, and Lady Madeleine, in requesting them to be seated, sat down herself. Lady Alice Browne then sat down, but in such a furious and aggressive way that it was obvious to one of the gentlemen at all events that the brave old Oranmore blood was there, and likely to show itself: it was not long in doing so.

‘Dr. Cross, I believe?’ said Lady Made-

leine, ignoring the other gentleman altogether, which she had a perfect right to do as he had not been introduced.

‘That is my name, madam,’ said Dr. Cross, who was not in the least degree afraid of Lady Madeleine, but who extremely disliked the style of Lady Alice Browne’s sitting down, and who said to himself, ‘That hanged Irishwoman is going to fight, confound her.’

‘What may be your pleasure with me, Dr. Cross?’ said Lady Madeleine.

‘I come to you on a disagreeable matter, Lady Madeleine. I think that I can claim the privilege of an old acquaintance.’

‘I think, Dr. Cross, I would sooner say that I had *heard* of you.’

‘That is the best thing to say, Maddy,’ said Lady Alice; ‘and it’s little good we have heard of you either.’

It was obvious that the Irishwoman *was* going to fight.

‘Madam,’ said Dr. Cross, turning to Lady Alice Browne, ‘you will excuse my saying that I have not the honour of *your* acquaintance.’

‘I am perfectly aware of the fact, sir,’ said Lady Alice. ‘The Brownes have always been respectable. There was a Brown hung for piracy once in the reign of King James the First, but he was no kin to us; he was an ‘English Brown, without the e. It is extremely probable that *your* family was acquainted with *his*. There was a Cross transported a few years ago for embezzling the funds of the Union of Ballyslovery during the Irish famine. Was he any relation of yours?’

‘He was, madam,’ said Dr. Cross; ‘he was my own first cousin. I should have

thought that anyone except a Browne would have hesitated to cast the fact in my teeth.'

He had got entirely the best of her there, and she said so at once.

'If I had known that he was your kin, I would have had my tongue pulled out before I would have mentioned his name: no one knows that better than yourself, for all you sit there trying to look as if I had hurt your feelings, which you can't do at all at all.'

'May I remark that this is not business?' said Dr. Cross.

'You may remark anything you like,' said Lady Alice Browne, 'and I'll reserve the same privilege to myself.'

'Madam,' said Dr. Cross, turning to Lady Madeleine, 'I am aware that you have an uncertified lunatic in the house.'

'These men can talk of nothing but them-

selves,' said Lady Alice in a very loud voice. Lady Madeleine took the cue from her, scarcely concealing her laughter.

'There is no one in my house madder than yourself, sir, when you say such a thing,' she said.

'Madam,' he replied, 'I am not to be put off in this way. Lionel Branscombe lives with you, and is now on the premises.'

'You deceive yourself, my good sir,' said Lady Madeleine; 'Mr. Lionel Branscombe has long given me the charm of his society, and to a certain neighbour of ours the use of his splendid intellect, which fact has helped in no small way to bring about some great political changes: but he is not here.'

'Not here!' said Dr. Cross. 'Where is he then?'

'I have not the wildest idea,' said Lady Madeleine.

‘No, bloodhound,’ said Lady Alice; ‘we took care to leave ourselves free about that matter. It was not enough that you ruined him once, but you must seek him out here, and try to ruin him again. We do not know where he is; we only know that he is where you cannot reach him. And before you go, which we will trouble you to do soon, mind this: every——’

A look from Lady Madeleine stopped her. The two ladies left the room by one door, for they had a signal; another was at once opened, and Mr. Wotherston entered by it.

Emphasis is most valuable if you desire to show your enemy your hand. Wotherston desired to do that on the present occasion. He might have said, ‘How do you do, Dr. Cross?’ without any emphasis on any particular word; it pleased him, however, to say, ‘How do *you* do, Dr. Cross?’ And by doing

so he expressed a somewhat offensive hostility.

‘Why are you here, Dr. Cross?’ was Wotherston’s question after he had been assured of Dr. Cross’s health.

‘I have come here,’ he said very coolly, ‘to enquire about the health of a lunatic, Lionel Branscombe by name, who I was given to understand was in seclusion here. May I ask you what right you have to speak to me in the way you have just done?’

‘I *think* that I would not ask that question, Dr. Cross,’ said Wotherston; ‘at least not from me. You know your own business best: you probably know it much better than I do.’

He paused for a long time, almost a minute: at last he said,

‘I am afraid I spoke rudely to you when I came in.’

‘Yes,’ said Dr. Cross.

‘Well, now then accept my most hearty apologies. I have no right to insult you. Still, a man of your penetration must see that we are entire enemies.’

‘I suppose after that declaration I may as well go?’ said Dr. Cross.

‘You are not in *my* house,’ said Wotherston, with again a most offensive emphasis on the word *my*, which implied that if he had been he would have been turned out of it.

Dr. Cross went. Wotherston had made the great mistake of not conciliating the man. It would have been a hundred times better had he done so at first, as the sequel will show.

CHAPTER XVII.

CROSS HEARS GOOD NEWS.

Dr. Cross was in one way Arthur Branscombe's father confessor, and had more power over him than a large majority of Romish priests have over their penitents. The Romish priest (as we are informed) receives the confession and then gives absolution. We will, however, pursue this matter no further; we only say that Dr. Cross insisted on Arthur Branscombe's telling him everything, and that he (Dr. Cross) shaped his conduct accordingly. Sometimes Arthur Branscombe was difficult at his confession: then Dr. Cross was very hard to please.

The difference between Dr. Cross and the Romish priest was this: the Roman penitent believes in the sanctity of the priest; Arthur Branscombe believed that Cross was in some respects not much better than himself. He told Cross everything, and yet he believed no very great good of Cross.

Still he loved Cross with all the affection of which his nature was capable. To analyse the causes of that love would be like sifting the sand of the sea-shore. We think that you will discover it. Arthur Branscombe had loved very few men, and was most perfectly certain that he could not tell why he cared for them. Arthur's first love was a hideous old groom of his father's, his second was a nearly idiotic young gamekeeper; and his third was Dr. Cross—who, first and last of all his favourites, had his confidence. We will see what his relations to Dr. Cross were.

‘I think that you have behaved like a thundering fool about your brother,’ said Dr. Cross to Arthur Branscombe after his unsuccessful journey to Weston.

Arthur said, ‘Why?’

That is the most exasperating monosyllable ever invented. Cross was angry at once; Arthur’s stupidity was extremely provoking. ‘Why?’ and nothing more, throwing the whole burden of explanation on him, Dr. Cross.

‘If you can’t see why,’ he said, ‘you must be a fool.’

‘I *am* a fool, Cross,’ said Arthur: ‘you have often told me so; but why have I been a fool about George? I only did what you told me.’

‘George! Let George get hanged. I am speaking of Lionel.’

‘As regards George being hanged,’ said

Arthur after one of his pauses, ‘if you think it right, I should not oppose it on mere family grounds. One of our family was publicly executed in 1183: I forget what he did, but he was executed for it. George and I have given the family such a bad name that another execution would not very much matter. But on sentimental grounds I should object to George’s being hung. He is an awful sweep; but although he is very ill-tempered with me I like him.’

‘Will you get it into your head that I am not talking about him, but about Lionel?’

‘Lionel; yes, I see. Well, it was a great pity that Lionel went mad. Lionel was a great ass: he took to learning, you know; and made a perfect fool of himself in many other ways.’

‘Well,’ said Dr. Cross, ‘I want to know

what you, as head of the family, are going to do about him.'

'I don't want to do anything about him. He never comes near *me*. You say that he is a lunatic ; George said something of the sort one time when he won seven pounds fourteen of me : I mean that it was the other way. Don't be so quick with me.'

'I was not quick with you.'

'You were going to be. You are sometimes, Cross. Sometimes you come down on me like a woman, and it makes me nervous.'

'I assure you that I was not going to be quick with you,' said Cross.

'Ah, but you were though ; you can't deceive me. When a woman whom you don't believe in comes down on you sharp, it's pretty bad ; but when the only man you

trust comes down on you, it's worse : and so don't come down.'

'How long will it take me to make this hopeless fool understand me?' thought Dr. Cross ; but he calculated on one of Arthur's pauses, and waited, with the full assurance that he should be nearer his object when he, Arthur, next spoke.

But in those long pauses Arthur thought slowly but not always foolishly ; the consequence was that he was very often disconcerting. He would follow out perfect phases of thought, while the waiting person was only idly wondering what he would say next. George used to say that if you gave him his own time, he would be up to it : that was true ; but he would do something else than that. He had a habit which you very seldom see in a man : he would dive into a sea of thought fathoms deep like a pearl

diver, and suddenly appear at the surface with no appreciable results ; he would dive into a logical Charybdis, and produce the middle term of some indefinite Sorites. So when he spoke next, all Dr. Cross got for his money was this :

‘The ass of Balaam is not to be confounded with the onager ; and the ancient Jews obviously did not hammer and thwack their donkeys like the modern costermongers.’

Here he dived into the sea of thought again ; and Dr. Cross, after the rather strong hint which he had had, left him there : when he rose to the surface, he produced his pearl, to Dr. Cross’s great disappointment, for he hoped that Arthur had got farther on.

‘The amount of capital spent in law, is, considering the value of money, not much greater in England at the present time than

in Rome at the time of the Cæsars. Jonathan Hack spent all his money over law, and the governor gave him eleven shillings for a pair of new breeches. Yes, and Lady Madeleine Howard got stung on the elbow at the same time, trying to take her own bees, because Jonathan Hack was in prison for law expenses.'

Here there was another dive after the thread of the argument. Cross knew his man, and waited. He came to the surface again with a singular question looking very much like business :

'Do you think that Lionel ought to be locked up? If you do have it done.'

'You are the head of the family, Arthur. I most certainly think so.'

'You are a disinterested adviser.'

'I am.'

'I know it; no one knows it better.'

You have been a true and faithful friend to me, and you kept that matter from the governor, and from those who would not pass it over as the governor would have done for the family's sake ; and you saved my life in addition. Many fellows, nay most, would have ruined me with blackmail if they knew what you know, and you have never asked me for a penny. And I am not an ungrateful fellow. I have saved every penny I can for you, Cross ; and every penny I can leave I have left to you, and the will is at the banker's.'

Oh, insensate madman ! oh, utter fool ! to sit there with the man's face opposite you, and not see the flush which came into that face, making the expressive mouth twitch convulsively as you spoke those words. Why, you told the man that his object was gained ; that he who had,

through the means of a discovery made by him of something done by you which would have placed you in a part of the court other than the witness-box, gained first your confidence, and then by his Judas forbearance your love, had now gained his great and carefully thought-out desire. Why, mad-man ! there was nothing left between him and wealth—but *your death*.

‘That is monstrous kindly intentioned of you, old fellow,’ said Dr. Cross, in much the same tone as if Arthur had given him a couple of tickets for the opera when Nilsson was going to sing, and they were difficult to get. ‘I dare say I should have made more use of the money than George : however, as I shall die about twenty years before you, since you have given up that infernal ‘drink, I shall never see it.’

‘Never fear that, Cross. You never

lived hard as I did. You will come into it fast enough. But about Lionel, I don't know how to go to work. Do what you will, and you may trust me to back you up. Good heaven! there is George kicking up a row in the stable-yard with one of the grooms. I wish he would not fall out with my servants. Here the fellow comes, and a good, respectable young chap too. Hang it, sometimes I wish George would go.'

Enter groom in a state of distraction.
'I wish to leave your service to-day, sir, and forfeit the month's wages.'

Arthur looked at him for a considerable period, and then said, 'Have you got another place, that you are in such a hurry to go?'

'No, sir,' said the man; 'I would never demean myself to a good master like you by bettering myself before warning. But I can't stand Mr. George, sir; he has——'

‘There, never mind what he has been doing,’ said Arthur. ‘I suppose you won’t stay?’

‘If Mr. George would treat me like anything else but a dog, I would, sir.’

Arthur made a long dive, and fished up this:

‘You are speaking in hot temper now; you come to me to-morrow morning, and speak about it again.’

The man went; and Arthur said to Cross, who was standing in the window—

‘Sometimes Cross, I think that I would like to pay George something, and get him out of the house.’

‘It would be no use; you would only have him back again when he had gambled away his money. He likes to live here, and he must. Men who have lived like you have, are sure to have some one to establish a raw

on them—Look what a raw I should have had on you if I had not been a gentleman.’

‘That’s true,’ said Arthur, ‘and thank you for it—I’ll go and have a row with George.’

CHAPTER XVIII.

STRUAN.

DR. CROSS had won his object; he would die rich, an arrangement which was in every way satisfactory if the dying could be omitted, which, however, was beyond the power of science, as no one knew better than he. For the next world he did not care, as he had assured himself that it did not exist; and as for this life, he knew that he could, by the resources of his profession and strict limitation of his pleasures, render it extremely tolerable for the next twenty years.

‘So *that* matter is accomplished, is it?’ said he to himself. ‘And George in my

hands. What a suspicious scoundrel that fellow is ; and cunning too,—quite as cunning as I am. Why when I dosed Arthur the other day, he slept on the same bed with him for fear of my getting the rummage among his papers which I desired, and put the footman to sleep across the door.’

(It had never occurred to Dr. Cross that Gabriel took up that position himself without any suggestion from anyone.)

‘ Well, he can do very much as he likes now : I must find Lionel ; try to get him into an asylum, if it is only for a short time ; I can at all events annoy him, which will please me, but I hope for much better things. Lionel safely locked up, his brother resumes—that is I resume—the management of his estate, and we can increase Arthur’s personalty to some extent. If we can’t manage matters, why then—though I am

not in such a hurry as that scoundrel George. What a capital thing it would be if he were to—but he won't—and get hung; but he is too great a coward for that.

‘There must be a great sum in ready money, certainly; this fellow has been hoarding for some years now; but I wish I could get this place too. It ought to be not only possible but easy too in any civilised country; but this, unfortunately, is nothing of the kind. There is Lionel in the way, and after him that fool of a girl Clara. She might marry if she inherited, though they say she looks like a ghost; I remember her a very pretty girl. That fellow who took the only woman I ever cared for away from me has frightened her with his ugliness and his insane vagaries into an idiot as well as a scarecrow. I fancy I remember the fellow as rather good-looking on the few occasions

I must have seen him. I'd marry her myself if I could get hold of her. No ! that is too wild even for me. Well, much is done, but more remains ; so onward. Hallo, whom have we here ? What a nicely put-on fellow. Your horse cost something, my friend, and your clothes too : you know how to sit the one and wear the other.'

A horseman had just come in at the gate,—a very handsome soldierly-looking man, with a bushy brown beard and a keen, bright eye. The whole of his *entourage*, from the crown of his own hat to the toe of his groom's boot, was simply perfection ; it is doubtful, looking through any great collection of costumes, whether any dress since the fourteenth century was so becoming as is that of our perfectly dressed Englishman or Frenchman of the present day *on horseback*. This man was what we have just mentioned,

factus ad unguem. Dr. Cross, who like some other scoundrels had a very high æsthetical taste, looked on and admired.

The stranger reined up his horse, and raising his hat (during which act Dr. Cross appraised his gloves at five shillings a pair—it was a habit of his to think about the money value of everything from a Rubens to a teaspoon), he said,

‘I feel sure that I am speaking to Dr. Cross.’

‘That is true, sir,’ said he, ‘but I have not the pleasure of remembering you.’

‘It would be odd if you did, Doctor,’ said the stranger. ‘I do not think that you ever consciously saw me. I, however, have often seen you in society, and Dr. Cross is too well known for a man like myself to resist an opportunity of making acquaintance with him.’

The Doctor bowed and smiled. His practice lay among that class of society to which the new comer seemed to belong, that of very rich men.

‘You are very kind, sir, I am sure,’ he added with perfect manner. ‘But you having me at an advantage, must now chivalrously introduce yourself.’

The horseman handed him his card; ‘Mr. Robert Struan.’ There was no address. ‘I cannot give you my address,’ he added, ‘for I am a bird of passage just now, and my house is let for the present, though it will be in my own hands soon. I am staying with Lord Levison at Downton Castle, and I am come over to see Mr. Branscombe, with whom I have been in correspondence about a picture. Are you staying there?’

‘I am.’

‘Then I shall probably see you again in a few minutes. I do not know if I am doing right, but I am in treaty for a small Tintoretto of his, for which he asks the rather large sum of four hundred and fifty pounds. Your opinion in matters of this kind is so notorious that, finding you accidentally here, I should be glad of your opinion about the matter, and so have introduced myself.’

‘I shall be most happy to give my friend, Arthur Branscombe, the benefit of my advice, and you, as a courteous stranger, the use of my poor assistance: for to tell you the truth, my friend Arthur is somewhat a screw about his works of art.’

Which being interpreted, meant, ‘My friend, as your cash will go into my pocket, I shall see that Arthur does not ask too

little, or, on the other hand, spoil the bargain by asking too much.'

'If you will ride on, I will follow,' said Dr. Cross. And Mr. Struan rode on up the avenue, saying to himself, 'How well that rascal lasts, while men like a certain friend of mine are hunted into a corner by such as he.' After which he laughed so long and so loud that his groom trotted up and asked if he had spoken.

He said, 'No,' with a good-humoured nod, and the next minute he was before the door.

He told the footman Gabriel that he had come by appointment, and Gabriel took his name in while he dismounted and looked about him. We have described the place before as being very attractive. Mr. Struan did not seem to be very attracted by it: he regarded it with singular indifference.

Gabriel soon reappeared with the butler and another footman. He was requested to walk in, which he did with perfect nonchalance, laying his whip and hat on the sideboard. The butler, preceding him along the Great Hall, pointed out to him the fact that it *was* the Great Hall.

He said ‘Oh, indeed!’ but never looked right or left.

He went up the great staircase, and on the landing above called the butler’s attention to a stuffed bustard, asking if they were common in this county. The butler replied that they were an uncommon bird, and that that one had been shot by Mr. Lionel Branscombe.

‘My friend Lionel is still remembered,’ he said. ‘I wonder if he would know the place if he saw it.’

A door was opened, and he stood in the

presence of Arthur Branscombe, who rose to meet him. He had his back to the window, from which circumstance he could not see him well, as the afternoon sun was blazing in his, Struan's, face.

‘How do you do, sir?’ he said. ‘I am obliged to you for this interview. I am collecting pictures, and I thought that I might be so bold as to ask for a look at your Tintoretto before I bought it.’

‘You are welcome, sir, in every way,’ said Arthur, who then retired into the realms of contemplation, while his guest sat down without being bidden. When Arthur had got himself right again, he said,

‘The fact of the matter is that we don't see much company here.’

‘So I have understood,’ said Mr. Struan.

When Arthur had done puzzling himself as to how the devil this dandified prig could

have found *that* out, and had ultimately come to the conclusion that one fellow's money was as good as another fellow's money, he said,

‘In consequence of which we rather lose our manners. I ought to have asked you to sit down. I am a great bear: my governor was before me; though the governor was the best man England ever produced. But you won't find such a queer fellow in creation as my brother George; and *he* is not a bad chap at all when he has got the money.’

Mr. Struan said ‘Exactly.’

If he had wished the conversation to proceed with any rapidity, he could not have done worse. First, Arthur Branscombe had to consider whether the beggar was chaffing him, which took a long time; then he had

to consider whether he ought in that case to kick the beggar, and what would happen if the beggar kicked *him*. He was a magistrate, certainly; but then the other beggar might be a magistrate; and what would happen then? He was wandering away in some speculations as to what would happen if he were to kick the Lord Lieutenant of the county, when he was aroused by Mr. Struan's saying, pleasantly,

‘I am only too anxious to have the picture, if I care for it after approval. I saw your advertisement, and answered it at once.’

‘You will not find it necessary to allude to the advertisement in the “Athenæum” if you meet any member of my family, will you?’ said Arthur.

‘Certainly not,’ said Mr. Struan.

Arthur rose and went on the landing : he turned to the left. Mr. Struan said quietly, 'Have you moved the picture?'

'No,' said Arthur.

'I thought that the picture hung in the Red Room?'

'So it does.'

'Is not the Red Room this way?' said Mr. Struan. 'There is a plan of the house in the "Gloucestershire Antiquarian Transactions," and I fancy that I am right.'

'Of course you are right, sir,' said Arthur Branscombe ; and as a bargain was before him he did not take time to get puzzled. The Red Room was reached with great rapidity, and the picture was viewed and approved without much trouble. There was the question of price, and Mr. Struan hesitated about that. He bought partly, he said, for his own pleasure, and partly on

speculation. Dr. Cross, a man known to both of them, was in the house,—in fact, he had met him in the park,—could not he decide?

‘I will always abide by Cross’s decision,’ said Arthur; and on going down to the dining-room they found not only Dr. Cross but George.

‘We are going to appeal to your judgment, Dr. Cross,’ said Mr. Struan. ‘I am in treaty with Mr. Branscombe for his Tintoretto. It is an inconceivable jewel of a thing. It was bought by Sir Philip Sidney out of Tintoretto’s own studio, at the very time when Tintoretto was taking Sir Philip Sidney’s portrait at Rome, in 1569. You can read Sidney’s autograph at the back of it, under Tintoretto’s; but it is merely an unfinished head, and I cannot give more than three hundred and fifty

pounds for it,—at least, unless you decide to the contrary.’

‘You are a bad buyer, Mr. Struan,’ said Dr. Cross; ‘you raise the price of the seller’s goods by your superior intelligence. After what you have said, I must charge you fifty pounds for your information. Arthur, take four hundred.’

Mr. Struan had taken no notice of George, though George had been watching and cursing him, a thing he did to every better-dressed and richer man than himself. Most English people have not the remotest objection to fine folks; they rather like them, as contributing by their sumptuary extravagance to the general well-being of the industrial producers of unnecessary luxuries, such, for example, as working jewellers—a doctrine which Professor Fawcett would most properly curse. George

Branscombe, however, hated everybody without enquiry who seemed superior to himself, and so he was peculiarly angry with Struan, who was decidedly better dressed than he was.

‘I beg to remark,’ he said, rising, ‘that I forbid this picture to be sold. I am heir-presumptive at law, and the picture is an heirloom.’

Now neither Cross or Arthur knew what an heirloom was. No more did Struan; but Struan rose to the situation. He wanted the picture, we suppose.

‘Can you define an heirloom, sir?’ he said, looking straight at George.

‘I know *that’s* one. It was the governor’s,’ said George.

‘I assure you that you are completely wrong, George,’ said Dr. Cross. ‘You

might as well say that I could not sell this ring because it belonged to my father.'

'Oh, hang *you*,' said George; 'we all know what *you* are; *you'll* stand by and see *my* property made away with.'

'You are extremely offensive, sir,' said Dr. Cross. 'You are trespassing on my generosity.'

'You might have to appeal to mine some day,' said George, leaving the room. But George was wrong. Dr. Cross was by no means a man likely to do that, for he knew that he would find very little mercy in that quarter.

As soon as George was gone, Mr. Struan said, 'I will take this picture, if you please, with the chance of an injunction. Dear me, there are my horses and my groom—I ought to say my groom and my horses—outside all this time. I must go.'

‘Arthur, my dear boy, let me run out and send Mr. Struan’s man and horses to quarters.’ And without waiting for an answer he departed. Struan was *in* for lunch, and he made a very feeble opposition.

CHAPTER XIX.

ARTHUR BEGINS TO SHOW HIS BETTER NATURE.

GEORGE BRANSCOMBE did not come in to lunch: the three lunched together; and Cross, who knew everybody, discovered that Mr. Struan was a first-cousin of his old friend Struan of Bradford, and had the same taste for pictures.

‘Art, sir!’ said Cross, ‘is now only patronised in the cities of the North. Amidst the coal-smoke of Lancashire and Yorkshire, the desire for the æsthetical reproductions of natural beauties exists most strongly. The deprivation of natural

beauties begets a craving for artificial ones : Art alone can supply that craving ; and consequently the merchant princes of the North stud their *salons* with the gems of the southern studios. Some of the greatest masterpieces (looking only at the modern school, those of Millais, Meissonnier, Landseer, Gerome, and Lleys, are to be found in the manufacturing palaces of the north of England. I again ask, why ? ’

The reason why he repeated the question was this, that the more he talked this balderdash, the more wide open did Mr. Struan’s eyes become, and the more emphatically did his face express, ‘What the deuce does the fellow mean by talking this nonsense to me ? ’

Mr. Struan remarked, ‘I fancy that a Manchester man seldom buys a bad picture.

By that I mean a picture which will not sell again at fifty per cent. profit.'

Cross saw that it would not do and that he must change his tone. Struan was quite as clever as he was.

Arthur Branscombe, who had had time to incubate, now said, possibly with indiscretion, but with great honesty,

'What Mr. Struan says is perfectly true. My governor bought that Tintoretto for a hundred and eighty. I have sold it to Mr. Struan for four hundred. If I had kept it for another three years, Mr. Struan, I should have got six hundred. But I am a poor man, Mr. Struan, a very poor man, and I can't be kept out of my money.'

'I am sorry to hear that, sir,' said Struan.

'Yes, sir, a very poor man—ruined by my brothers.'

‘That is very sad,’ said Struan.

‘Yes, but it is true, though. George, as you have seen, is not all that he might be to me, and Lionel has gone far to break my heart.’

Cross sat wondering what Arthur was going to say next. It did not much matter, for the remedy to anything which Arthur might say was in his own hands, but still he was curious. The man before him was evidently a very sharp, keen man, and might be useful one way or another.

‘My brother Lionel went mad,’ continued Arthur, sententiously and slowly. ‘And instead of getting himself properly certified, as any decently conducted lunatic would have done, he bolted off to two old bedlamites (who to my certain knowledge were stung in trying to take their own bees), and was with them seven years, drawing six-

teen hundred a year as if he was sane all the time. My brother dressed himself like the devil, and everybody was afraid to go near the place ; and in addition to that he got my sister Clara to dress like a ghost ;—and he, dressed like a devil, and my sister like a ghost, used to come out into a back lane at nightfall, so that everyone was afraid of going by.’

‘ Hang it,’ thought Dr. Cross, ‘ that fellow states the case better than I *dare*—fool as he is.’

‘ Strange conduct, certainly,’ said Mr. Struan.

Mr. Struan’s remark caused Arthur to look at him steadily for a short time : at last he said,

‘ Do you consider, sir, that the circumstances which I have above mentioned would justify me in locking my brother up as a lunatic ? ’

‘Indubitably,’ said Mr. Struan, ‘if you can prove them. Now I want to tell you something. I knew your brother Lionel, and I liked him. All this may be true, or it may not: if you have your brother Lionel locked up, as you call it, will you see that he is taken good care of?’

There was no pause here, but a sudden flush of anger. Struan used to say afterwards that never in his experience had he seen such a curious involution of sentiment. Avarice certainly predominant, then in detail family pride, remembrances of old times, recollections of what Lionel was and what he might have been himself under different guidance—who knows what passed through that dull brain with singular rapidity, as he rose and said,

‘Sir, no stranger has call to plead with me, Arthur Branscombe, on the score of his

own brother. I have been kind to my kin, as Cross there will tell you. I don't want Lionel's money to be messed about, and I won't have it. But as for a hair of Lionel's head being hurt, I won't stand that. You say you are his friend, and so I speak to you freely. Lionel was a quiet fine fellow; the governor loved him though he kept it to himself. I am going to have Lionel put out of the way of getting rid of his money; but every pleasure I can afford for him shall be his. He will be happier where I shall put him than he would be elsewhere.'

'A lunatic asylum is not a pleasant place, Mr. Branscombe,' said Struan. 'You are scarcely doing your duty by your brother if you do not act with singular care.'

'I am not going to have sixteen hundred pounds a year thrown away,' said Arthur, returning to the argument of avarice, on

which point Cross knew he would be 'sound,' and so let him speak without interruption.

'Where is your brother, Mr. Branscombe?' said Mr. Struan.

'We know where he is,' said Dr. Cross, 'and can lay our hands on him at any moment.'

'Indeed!' said Mr. Struan. 'Well, about this picture; may I send for it in a few days if I leave a cheque now?'

'Certainly,' said Arthur.

'May I see your four Velasquez in the Blue Room?' said Mr. Struan.

'I will show them to you with pleasure,' said Arthur; and having ordered Mr. Struan's horses, the pair went away together. Dr. Cross did not attend them.

Struan and Arthur came down together after having inspected the Blue Room.

Struan rode away, and Arthur went out riding over his farm. He finally went to bed.

He was generally in a state of puzzlement, out of which he ultimately got. When he went to bed this night he was in a worse state than ever he was in his life. He was awfully posed about something, *but he could not conceive what that something was*. He woke Cross late in the night, to see if that was any good. Now if any gentleman awakes another gentleman in the middle of the night, and tells him that he is puzzled about something, and cannot possibly tell what that something is, it is perfectly natural for the awakened gentleman to swear at the other gentleman and go to sleep again; which is exactly what Dr. Cross did; he had much better have sat up and talked with Arthur Branscombe. But Arthur Branscombe was a fool, and Cross was so very clever.

CHAPTER XX.

FATHER WILSON JOINS A HAPPY TEA PARTY.

THE best room in the Grange looked very bright and homelike. A good wood fire was burning on the hearth, and disputing with the nearly setting sun the right of illumining the old china on the cabinets and brackets. That the fire would ultimately win was a fact not to be disbelieved by any ordinary educated person ; yet the sun still had considerably the best of it, and showed off the upright figure of Lady Alice Browne very well as she sat in the oriel window looking on the garden.

Before her was set out a tea-service of any value you may like to put upon it,—say two thousand dollars *currency*; and there were six cups on the tray, whereas there were only two people present, which will doubtless show the reader, without any assistance on the author's part, that Lady Alice Browne expected company. Company not being usual at the Grange, we hope that our reader is curious about who was expected. Premising that it was not our early friend, Mrs. Morgan, and that the ladies were not going to have the servants to tea, we will let the company introduce themselves.

There was a teapot in the centre of the table, and there were nine spoonfuls of tea in it for six people, the largest allowance ever made, except (contingently) in case of a visit from Royalty, when the whole resources of the establishment would have

been put in immediate requisition, regardless of any expense, present or future. To those who knew our two ladies, however, had they also known the secret of the nine spoonfuls, it would have been perfectly obvious that they expected some people very little, in their estimation, short of the Royal Family.

There was no urn on the table. They *had* urns—silver ones too, but they never used them; they were foolish arrangements, savouring of steam (which, however, they were sharp enough to use for thrashing their wheat out). A little silver kettle was set on the edge of the wood fire, and Lady Madeleine Howard was set to watch that kettle.

She, like Lady Alice Browne, was dressed as if she was going to receive the county. Grey silks, perfectly falling dull white lace shawls, French gloves of very light mauve

colour, and carefully parted greyish hair, made them look like two smooth old pigeons of some rare and exquisite variety unknown to Mr. Tegetmeier.

Lady Madeleine is talking as we, ghost-like, enter the darkening room.

‘I am ready to put on my bonnet, to go before the bench, and swear that he never got drunk at this house.’

‘How much of our beer did he have?’ said Lady Alice.

‘The little pint mug, my dear, which holds less than two glasses, if you count the froth. And no one could get drunk on that quantity of our beer, you know.’

The whole parish would have followed her ladyship before any Committee of the House of Commons, or even a Royal or Election Commission, and have taken their oaths to *that* as one man.

‘What money did he have?’ said Lady Alice.

‘Six shillings for the two days, deducting twopence for breaking the hoe. I have booked it, as you will see on Saturday.’

‘It is obvious to me,’ said Lady Alice, as if she had made a grand discovery, ‘that he spent that money at the public-house. And so he kicked the policeman?’

‘My love, I saw it with my own eyes. It was young Colley that he kicked,—with his boots. Young Colley pulled up his trousers in the public streets, and showed me his shins. It was extremely improper on his part, even with a woman of my age; but our people, with all their excellent qualities, will never learn manners. The young man’s shins were black and blue.’

‘If you *are* summoned before the bench, mark, Maddy, you can only swear as to the

amount of beer he had here ;—they cannot hang us for that.’

A third out of the six had come into the room almost as soon as we (speaking in a ghostly manner) did. He had been standing in the room, in shadow, ever since, listening to the conversation in the coolest manner, and turning his head from one side to the other like a listening raven, or, to be correct, a jackdaw.

He was a nice little man, dressed in the way which the dissenting ministers and the Roman Catholics alike use now, with very slight difference, that of the shirt collar. That he was not an Anglican might be seen from the shortness of his coat. Had you met him in the street, he would have been wearing an ordinary chimney-pot hat, and would, save for the fact that he was closely shorn, have looked pretty much like anyone else.

This was Father Wilson, Lady Madeleine's director.

He was a Jesuit of some very high order. (We do not know whether even there *are* orders among the Jesuits, but there is no doubt that he was very high among them.) He was not by any means the 'Jesuit in disguise' of M. Eugene Sue and other writers. He openly gloried in the fact, and aired it on every possible occasion and in the most open manner. A singular fact was that he was very high in the books of the violent Protestant, Lady Alice Browne, who said that, according to his lights, he was a most honest and excellent little fellow.

He remarked quietly, out of the shadow, 'So you are talking in that way to put off the inevitable. What do either of you care about a tipsy peasant, with what you have before you?'

‘And that’s true enough for you, Mr. Wilson,’ said Lady Alice; ‘but if you didn’t worry yourself about the little things in this world, the great ones would kill you. If you have ever been by the sea, you must have seen it. The little summer waves at every tide eat away the weakest points on the rocks; and so when the great winter sea bursts on them, the old brave rocks have no weak points to show. People who ignore petty troubles are not always ready for great ones. We found that out, didn’t we, Maddy?’

Lady Madeleine would have been inclined to dispute that last proposition, because, though they had certainly found out the truth of it now, there was a time when they certainly had not,—that is to say, when Lionel had arrived. But before they could discuss the matter further, they heard the

doors opening, and next moment Lionel and Clara were in their arms.

From tears to laughter, from laughter to tears again. How they looked at one another—how they embraced one another! They who had gone through so much together, were once more united under such different circumstances, though there was much to pull through yet. It was a time of happiness such as some of them at least had not seen for years. And through all their follies the villanous old Jesuit stood by, rubbing his hands and scratching his tonsure in fiendish joy—which, however, looked extremely real.

And there was Clara, standing in the light of the setting sun. Could it be she? Could the ghastly, terrified, worn face which had haunted the Grange for so many years, be the same which we look on now,—

chastened, sedate, and pensive,—pale, certainly, but very beautiful? It was the same, and those will believe it who know what women will go through and live.

One very soon stood beside her in the window, and took her hand. It was Wotherston. She pressed his hand frankly, and said, ‘Not yet, not yet.’ And he, being a gentleman, kissed her hand, and letting it fall, took his seat beside her, and said no more.

And all the guests having arrived, they sat down to tea. Silence having been proclaimed while Lady Madeleine poured in the hot water, an anxious operation in that house, and the Jesuit father having been pointedly requested by the Protestant Lady Alice to ‘bless the victuals,’ they all fell to talking at once, and they made such a noise that Farmer Joyce, who was in the back lane, went home

with the idea that the two old ladies had at last raised an evil spirit, and were trying ineffectually to scold him off the premises without payment in full.

CHAPTER XXI.

FATHER WILSON UNFOLDS HIS PLOT TO
WOTHERSTON.

OUR dear old ladies had not by any means raised an evil spirit, but a very good one. For a long time they had seen that Lionel and Clara were doing no good with them, but that both were getting into a morbid state of mind, which might become chronic with either of them. They had talked over the matter a great deal together, in their patient, sensible way, and had at last determined that the brother and sister should leave them.

Their ideas of the laws of hospitality were

so strict that neither of them dared speak. They waited for a *deus ex machinâ*, a person who always comes if you wait for him.

The first help they got was on that night, before mentioned, when Lionel in his fantastic dress, and Lady Madeleine in her nightgown, had scared the house from its propriety. They had then pointed out to Lionel that it would not do, going on in this way; that the house was getting a bad name, and that they were determined that a change should take place. It would be better for all parties, they said, that the brother and sister should make some change, at least for a time.

Lionel and Clara had foreseen this, and were prepared, in a general way, for it. That is to say, they had it always *en vizage*, but delayed. There was, however, no possibility of delay after Lady Madeleine received that letter from young Gabriel, the

Pollington footman, informing her of the design against Lionel's liberty, suggested in his hearing by George to Arthur, and only wanting Cross's sanction to be carried out.

Wotherston had been called in at once. He recommended flight, immediate flight, on the part of Lionel. Father Wilson was sent for, and came the next day; he also urged immediate flight. Lionel did as they told him, and left the Grange Garden at nine in the evening, in Wotherston's carriage, accompanied by Clara.

Wotherston and the Jesuit priest, having seen them off, went back into Lionel's room to have a confabulation over matters. The ladies were gone to bed, but they had most suggestively left a tray, with things on it which the soul of Sir Wilfrid Lawson abhors. Also they had left one of the departed Lionel's cigar boxes, half empty, whereby

Squire Wotherston perceived that the fraternity of the Broken Heart had no connexion with the Band of Hope.

The Jesuit lit a cigar ; the Squire did the same. ‘I think, Mr. Wotherston,’ said the Jesuit, ‘that we have done the best we can. If he is to be useful to us, he ought to go into the world again ; if he is to be useful to you, still he should go back to the world.’

‘Assuredly you are right, my dear Father,’ said Wotherston. ‘He would be of no use to anyone if he stayed here. But can he be absolved from the vows which he rather rashly took, in a moment of terror and agony?’

‘Oh ! as to that matter,’ said Father Wilson, ‘he is absolved from them by the Pope. I told the Pope that it was a case in which he should act, and he has done so. Lionel is perfectly free.’

‘Then have you given up all hold over Lionel?’ said Wotherston.

‘I have given up one, only to get another ten times more powerful. You may have remarked that Lionel is a gentleman?’

‘Assuredly.’

‘Well, we have given him his vows, and bought his tongue. We have also given him his vows, and bought his honour. He will make a position in the world, but he will never say a word against us. As a shepherd would say, we have marked him and turned him out; he may say anything he likes, but our treatment of him has gagged him from saying anything against *us*. The man, I say again, is a gentleman; if he becomes Prime Minister, which is on the cards, he will always be gentle to us.’

‘You are the devil,’ said Wotherston.

‘I assure you that we are not,’ said the

Jesuit. 'We are a most persecuted set of people, and no one understands anything about us. We shall inevitably gain our object in the end: our treatment of Lionel Branscombe would show you that. We let him go free because we have by doing so merely gained his negative good word; we are rich in power.'

'But what is your object?' said Wotherston.

'Universal power,' the Jesuit answered, with a merry laugh. 'But to mundane affairs. Here is the programme which I have sketched out for Lionel. Cast your eye over it, and point out to me anything of which you disapprove. You know, Mr. Wotherston, that you and I are the only two men alive to whom he will listen; I have shown my whole hand to you; we would keep him if we could, but we can't. We want to let him

go, and keep his goodwill, because he will make his place in Parliament when we have fought the Philistines. Read what I have written down, and give me your opinion.'

There was a long pause while Wotherston was reading. At last he said earnestly, pointing to a page in the sheets of letter paper which were in his hand,

'Do you think that that is possible? His nerve has been very much shaken by this absurd seclusion. He will break down.'

'My dear Mr. Wotherston,' said the Jesuit, 'I have no fear. Lionel is no ordinary man. He will pull through matters perfectly well.'

'I think that you are right there,' said Mr. Wotherston. 'Well, we will chance it.'

Then he passed on to another page.

'Ye-e-s,' he said slowly, 'that is not a bad idea, but rather far-fetched, is it not?'

'It will be much the best way,' said the

Jesuit. ‘You never know who is listening ; the young footman at Pollington is the son of the old Bartons here. He is faithful now, but he is in Cross’s hands if he gets even a pain in his stomach. You have got the very old devil to fight in Cross ; so I say, play that card and he must show his hand, one way or another.’

‘It’s a very dangerous card to play on our side,’ said Wotherston. ‘You will excuse me as a Protestant, but under the direction of the Holy Roman See, Lionel has been playing fools’ tricks here for the last seven years, and many a man has been locked up for less. Besides, there is that old accusation against him for poisoning his child,—in fact, that man Cross may plague us in fifty ways.’

‘After what you have seen to-night, are you still afraid?’ said the Jesuit. And

Wotherston, after a long pause, said ‘No,’
—that he, on the whole, did not think he was.

With this viaticum Lionel and Clara had been sent out into the world together once more. After a time, they had returned for a short visit to Grange Garden. And from the noise which was made on that occasion, Farmer Joyce thought that they were raising the devil.

CHAPTER XXII.

LIONEL'S REPORT.

It is entirely impossible for the most experienced story-teller to give the details of dialogue when everybody talks at once. Shakspeare has tried to do it several times, and has not succeeded; Goethe has tried it, noticeably in the fourth act of 'Faust,' and has utterly failed. After such superhuman failures, we decline to lay our poor little one at the feet of the reader; we can only set down what everyone said when the company at Grange Garden were rationally audible, and do that without any affectation.

Lady Alice Browne, with that power belonging singularly to her nation, the power of making herself heard, if not always attended to, began the reproducible conversation by saying to Lionel,

‘How is Struan?’

‘He is wonderfully well,’ said Lionel.

‘And he has been to Pollington?’ said Lady Alice.

‘He has been there,’ said Lionel.

There was a dead silence now.

‘And what does he report?’ said Lady Alice.

‘It would take a long time to tell *that*,’ said Lionel. ‘But I will tell you all that he told me.’

The dead silence continued; they waited for Lionel to begin, for which thing he seemed somewhat unprepared, and there was a longer pause than they thought for.

Lady Madeleine Howard sat in her chair before the fire, perfectly patient. Between her and the fire was the cat, comfortably asleep; beyond the cat was the wood fire and the silver tea-kettle, which was evidently boiling down to the last gasp. Lady Madeleine, who wished for boiling water and not for melted silver, rose and went to the rescue of the tea-kettle, and trod on the cat, who bolted up the chimney with foul language, while Lady Madeleine stumbled so far into the fireplace that the company assembled had a sudden idea that she was going to follow the cat, and so brand herself as a witch for ever in the estimation of Farmer Joyce and the ghost party at Weston. That strong-minded Protestant, however, Lady Alice Browne, rescued her, dusted her, slapped her, and pushed her back into her chair. Then the cat having

lost her hold in the chimney, fell on to the top of the fire, without taking the smallest harm (as it was nearly out); and Father Wilson having remarked that the —— was loose in the house, as he was in all houses which harboured heretics; and Lady Alice having demanded what he meant by *that*, Lionel went on with his story, amidst profound attention.

‘My friend Struan went to Pollington, and bought a certain picture. Struan, as you all know, had been at Pollington in my father’s time.’

‘Did they recognise him?’ said Father Wilson.

‘Not a bit,’ so he says. ‘He remembered that young footman, Gabriel Barton, as a page, but Gabriel Barton did not recognise him.’

‘Who did Struan see there?’ said Lady Alice.

‘He saw Arthur Branscombe, George Branscombe, and Dr. Cross.’

‘Cross had never seen Struan before, had he?’ said Father Wilson.

‘Oh, yes!’ said Lionel, ‘you are quite mistaken; you forget Cross had seen Struan once or twice.’

‘Of course,’ said Father Wilson, ‘I mean after a certain time.’

‘Well, neither Arthur, George, nor Cross recognised Struan or remembered his name, and he heard all that he wanted to hear about me. It is fortunate, because they talked about me in the most undisguised manner.’

‘And what are their intentions about you?’ said Lady Madeleine.

‘I fancy—from what Struan said, you know’—(to which Lady Alice answered ‘Exactly’)—‘that George or Cross originated the idea of locking me up, for the sake of

drawing my money. They all three are determined on doing it, however, as soon as they can find me.'

Here there was a general laugh.

'Well, they *might* find me, you know, and then they could give me great trouble, for I have been a great fool. Aunt Madeleine, my dear soul, I think—if you will excuse my mentioning it—that you are on fire.'

She was examined cautiously, and found to be on fire in her under-petticoat. Lady Alice Browne, as she expressed it, 'put her out' single-handed, and the rest of the conversation was rather interrupted by Lady Madeleine's laments over her smouldered under garment.

'Now, what line of action do you intend to take?' said Wotherston.

'I think that my course is very simple,'

said Lionel. 'To live all this down, and then appear, and defy everyone.'

'That will be the best way,' said Father Wilson; 'that was my plan from the first. But I want to ask you one thing more. Do you think that Struan will go often to Pollington?'

'I fancy,' said Lionel, 'that Struan will follow my directions, and be almost always there. I conceive that Struan is going to rent the house and the shooting, if my brother Arthur will let it to him; and my brother will do a great deal for money.'

'He would sell his soul for money,' said Wotherston.

'Why, no, old boy,' said Lionel. 'According to Struan he won't do that. Arthur spoke very kindly about me to Struan, and by the Lord I will stand by Arthur.'

‘Then, as I gather,’ said Lady Alice, ‘you have got some revived affection for your brother Arthur which will cause you to send Struan to the place habitually? And I hope that Struan is a true friend to you?’

‘My dear Lady Alice,’ said Lionel, ‘he is the best friend I ever had.’

This remark, apparently most innocent, had the singular effect of making Lady Alice Browne lose her temper. She began by simply stating that Lionel was a fool in trusting to Struan, who might ruin him at any moment by one single act of indiscretion. She added that she had known Struan from his boyhood, and that he was an outrageous noodle—neither of which statements happened to be peculiarly true; but she had, after the manner of her nation, put a stone in the end of her stocking, and

seeing that Lionel and Clara were laughing at her, she turned on Father Wilson, and informed him, as a piece of news, that the Pope was the father of lies, and that she would very much like to see the man who would say the contrary to that.

Father Wilson began laughing, and his laughter was contagious. Lady Alice was the last to join in : when she did so, she did with a will. The fact is that those who are likely to win generally laugh. At this moment it was discovered that Mrs. Barton was in the room, listening. ‘I was right,’ said Father Wilson.

Wotherston had a long talk with Clara, as she saw him down the garden to the gate in the moonlight. When he went out, he kissed her ; but perhaps we are going too far in mentioning the fact.

Lionel and Clara went to their old rooms,

and were parting at the doors which they knew so well.

‘It seems too good to be true, Lionel,’ she said.

‘But it *is* true,’ said Lionel, catching her in his arms. ‘Oh, my sister! my sister! my sister! was there anyone ever in this world half so good as you have been? In the long horror of years which might have ended in madness for either of us, you were always beside me. When I was at my wildest, darling, I could see terror in those eyes of yours which shall express terror no more. Oh, my most faithful and beloved sister, what can I ever do to repay you?’

‘Look always as you are looking now.’

‘And how is that?’

‘Happy; with hope in your eyes.’

He laughed, and put his arm round her

waist. 'Clara,' he said, 'do you love Wotherston still?'

'Yes.'

'Why do not you tell him so?'

'I have.'

'For what are you waiting then?'

'For you. You are not safe yet, my own brother. You will want me a little longer. One more kiss, and good-night.'

The kiss was given, and Lionel went into his old room and went to bed, blowing his candle out, and intending to dream of Clara's noble faithfulness to him, and of the way in which he would requite it. It was a noble sketch of a dream——but——

If everyone could dream of what he chose, I consider that the whole population of these islands would stay in bed until they were awakened by the last trump, and then

a good many of them would sham sleep until the last moment.

All this, however, is somewhat past the mark. Lionel had sketched out his dream, but he never had it. When he did get to sleep, he dreamt of Dr. Cross. There were, however, certain interruptions before he closed an eye.

Lady Madeleine came in first, and sat on the foot of his bed. Her candle was of village manufacture, and required snuffing by human fingers, in the absence of snuffers, and Lionel was obliged to remark to her that, although he was only third in succession, he did not wish to be burnt alive in his bed.

She was in her dressing-gown, which became her well; but in which she never appeared save in supreme moments. She also had her long grey hair streaming down

her back, which proved to Lionel that she had something important to say to him ; because she never showed herself to any human being—save in cases of fire, war, murder, earthquake, or revolution—without carefully doing her hair. As she had never undergone any of the above-mentioned experiences, no one had ever seen her with her hair down before. Lionel therefore made the shrewd guess that something was the matter and asked her what she going to say to him.

‘I am going to say, good-night,’ said Lady Madeleine. So she kissed him and went, which was not satisfactory.

Then Wotherston came, but had no good account to give of himself. ‘He wanted to see if his old boy was comfortable ;’—that was his lame excuse.

Then when he was gone Clara came in,

and she obviously wanted to talk about something which she was disinclined to name. Lionel heard her talking about the Garden, about the way in which the gypsies had stolen the old ladies' trout, about everything, until wondering what they all wanted with him, about which they could not sleep, he fell asleep himself, and dreamt that his hands were tangled in the hair of the wife who was once so dear to him, and that wherever he turned a tress of it there grew a rose.

He awoke in the grey morning : Clara had sunk on the bed beside him, in her clothes, and it was in her hair that his hands were twined ; he awoke her with a kiss, and bade her go to her room.

CHAPTER XXIII.

THE CONVENT.

THAT offshoot of a certain great community of nuns, well known in the world for their liberality,—that offshoot, I say, which is called the Stephanocanthine, is probably the most severe in the world. They are, unlike the main body, denied speech; they wear each other's clothes; they can possess nothing; and they dig their own graves, although from the fact of their houses of seclusion lying in the midst of a large city, they never lie in them; the secular arm, in the persons of the two Houses of Assembly

and the King, having interfered in this detail on sanitary grounds. In all other respects those holy women are completely free.

Their object is contemplative religion of the most severe kind, and nothing is allowed to interfere with it. Occasionally a sister joins the Stephanocanthines who is troublesome and disobedient, having miscalculated her powers of endurance and submission; that sister gets discipline even more severe than the ordinary, and generally finds her senses; but after a third lapse she disappears for ever, and no one misses her except the Bishop-visitor, the Prioress, and some of the half-secular, half-religious people who gain a livelihood by hanging about the gates of the holy garden, and occasionally getting glimpses of the glory inside, which generally ends, in such low

minds as theirs, by their thinking themselves well off where they are.

The unsuccessful sister is not murdered, or bricked up in a cellar: she is only removed to the great nunnery lying a little away from the Namur road, ten miles off, in the Ardennes. Here she gets a very different kind of treatment, and generally stays. It is very seldom that a nun passes back into the world from *that* establishment: rarely save in cases of gross misconduct, and against her own will, does that happen. Any nun can be liberated within twenty-four hours, by the civil power, but not one is ever remembered to have desired it. Once or twice in the memory of the oldest nun have the two visiting Bishops and the Prioress used the fearful power given them. And old Sister Podagra—who would probably have been Prioress herself had it not

been for the effect which the shooting of her corns had upon her temper, causing her to make indiscreet remarks in a loud tone of voice during the most solemn parts of the service, before a change in the weather,—old Sister Podagra would sometimes tell the terrified novices, to cheer them up on a dark Friday afternoon in November, the awful fate which had befallen Sister Tintinabula (so she called her for secresy), who went on from bad to worse until she hit Sister Dorcas over the head with a casserole. She was taken into the parlour in her secular dress, she was called by her secular name, Bridget Cassidy, and was taken away to the city and sent back to her friends in disgrace.

Sister Podagra used to stop here, and not tell the whole dreadful truth. Bridget Cassidy, a noble, hot-tempered, warm-hearted Irish girl, had managed to escape

from her guardians at Ostend, and had walked back through byways in the winter to beg pardon. She was found dead in the snow before the numery gate, after having vainly endeavoured to find the bell in the fierce blinding drift.

But there were few dark legends like this about the place, which was a bright, clean, sunny spot, with fine buildings, a handsome chapel, and gardens as good as the mind of man could desire. The Lady Prioress was in reality royal, and some of the wealthiest, and what is better the most beautiful girls from several kingdoms were sent here, to be educated in everything save the ways of that world which they had to encounter. The surliest of ascetics would have grown bright for a moment had he seen the girls laughing and working among the flowers ; but no sour ascetic ever saw

them. The Bishops and the Lady Prioress, though they sometimes had a few words on other matters, were agreed on one, and that was that the religious life should be made as agreeable as was compatible with discipline; and it was.

Sometimes, perhaps once a year, the awful black figure of the Prioress of the Stephanocanthines would be seen swiftly passing through the bright garden on business with her superior: then the young ladies would cross themselves and be silent; looking with awe at Sister Paulina, a great favourite of theirs, who had been *there* (they never used any other expression) for eleven months and ten days. She never spoke of her experience, but it was generally understood that she couldn't stand it, and so had come here. There was something curious about Sister Paulina in other ways:

although treated with the highest respect; she always sat in chapel among the novices; not to keep order, because Sister Podagra could have done *that*, and done it with a vengeance too, if her corns happened to trouble her, as they well knew; but for some other reason. She could not be a novice herself, because she wore the same dress as the professed nuns. About her occurred the greatest sensation which that little microcosm had known during the experience of the oldest pupil.

A lady, very handsomely and quietly attired in a fashionable secular dress, came from the Lady Prioress's parlour on to the terrace, one summer morning. Marie Latude de Solidor (who was going into the world next week), as senior student, at once carried her beautiful Breton person up to the stranger to do the honours of the place—

conceive her emotion when she saw in the handsome lady before her Sister Paulina !

‘Yes, my love,’ she said, as Marie de Solidor stood amazed, ‘I am going to leave you ; I am going back into the world.’

‘But for ever, Sister Paulina?’ said the girl, with her sapphire eyes filled with tears.

‘I cannot say. I have a long dark future before me : so may you have, my child, for the world is very wicked. Still God is there, as He is here : He will take care of you as He will of me if we pray to Him. I came out because I saw that I could speak to you alone ; we shall be alone no more. Pray for me,’ she continued, to the now sobbing girl, ‘and I will pray for you. I must go in to the Lady Prioress ; tell the others, and I will see them at the *portecochère*. I have taken leave of the Sisters.’

‘ Shall I hear nothing more of you, my mother ? ’ said Marie Latude de Solidor.

‘ Yes ; we will write to one another, and I will advise you. I know your address at St. Servan ; I will give you mine.’ And she wrote on a leaf in her pocket-book, and gave it to her. Then they parted on the terrace, and Sister Paulina went in. Marie Latude de Solidor read on the paper—

Mrs. Lionel Branscombe,

Chez Lady Madeleine Howard,

The Grange,

Weston,

Shropshire, England.

CHAPTER XXIV.

TURNED INTO THE WORLD.

MRS. LIONEL BRANSCOMBE, now Sister Paulina no longer, went back into the Prioress's parlour, and there found a little priest unknown to her, but perfectly well known to us, who was introduced to her as Father Wilson.

Father Wilson looked with extreme interest at her: his verdict was, 'Very handsome woman; nervous mouth and motion of the hands; amiable, soft-hearted woman,—word as bad as a blow to her; fool for leaving here, but had better try it.'

These thoughts passed through his mind while he was listening to and understanding every word of the Lady Prioress's speech.

‘Well, my dear Paulina (I cannot call you by that odious name, at all events not now), we are going to lose you ; every one in the convent will be sorry, none more so than I. I will pray honestly to the Virgin that you yourself, my dear, may not in the end be more sorry than all of us put together. But if the world is too rough to you, you know your home ; if the waves cast you up here again, the mere murmur of them will not be heard inside our wicket.’

‘God bless you, my very dear mother,’ said Mrs. Lionel, sobbing heartily.

‘Now,’ said the Lady Prioress, after a short pause, ‘let us have a little conversa-

tion, so that we may all part with a perfect understanding. My dear, I will put my view of the case to Father Wilson; you will correct me in any point on which I am wrong. You, Father Wilson, doubtless know all, and more than I am about to tell you; but I wish to state the case in my own way.

‘Mrs. Lionel Branscombe had the most terrible shock which a woman could have; it came on her like a thunderbolt in a moment of confidence and happiness, and utterly unhinged, not her reason, that by God’s providence has remained by her, but her judgment. As a Catholic she naturally went to her ghostly director, Father Gilbert, since dead, and put before him her wish at once to join the Sisterhood of the Stephano-canthines. Of course he knew her mind best, and so I say no more, except that I

wish she had come to our Bishop, or, if I may dare to say so, to you.'

'Mother, forgive me,' said Father Wilson; 'I conceive that I should have given her the same advice, and that it would have been attended with exactly the same results.'

'Sir, you are wiser than I am,' said the Prioress bowing. 'Arrangements were made for her going there, and she actually had the resolution to endure for eleven months a discipline which would kill me in three. From what little I had seen of the lady I was, I frankly confess, utterly astonished at her perseverance in a course which could only end in one of two ways, death or withdrawal. She wisely chose the latter course before the year was out, and began her novitiate here under certain concessions and indulgences which we are allowed to make under peculiar circumstances. How much of

her trouble has been due to the very common feminine weakness of assuming a thing too readily, and believing in it too obstinately, I am not here to say. That fault (if it existed) has been certainly modified.

‘But steadily as the years went on which she passed with me, I saw a change in her which grew greater every year. Diligent as she was, deeply loved as she was, she was not happy, and wished for the world again. I pressed her to tell me her grief, but she would not, confiding it to the Bishop ; since when, of course, the matter has passed out of my hands, and into the hands of my spiritual director, to whom I always bow.

‘I have only to say, in conclusion’——
But it did not appear that she was quite certain of what she was going to say in conclusion : she looked on the table, on the floor,

under her chair, everywhere close by, but at last said, with that beautiful absence of affectation which you see highest in the French Lady,

‘The fact of the matter is that all I have been saying to you I had written out and learnt by heart, and I have lost the paper.’

‘I thought you spoke rather easily,’ reflected Father Wilson, and then said aloud,

‘My dear madam, do not regret it’ (a Frenchman would have been desolated at the loss of a document of so much value, but he was a Scotchman), ‘*Ex abundantia cordis loquitur os.*’ (‘Exactly,’ said the Lady Prioress, who did not understand Latin.) ‘I would sooner you said the rest extempore.’

‘There is little more to say, except that I hope she will be happy with these two pious Catholic ladies, who have moved so generously in the matter, and got you, all-powerful

in these things, to procure her re-entrance into the world, and have now offered her an asylum. They, I understand, live secluded from the world, and pass their time in peaceful meditation.'

A vision of Lady Alice Browne, hot from the garden, with her sleeves turned up to her elbows, doing fierce battle with the fishmonger at the front door, rose before Father Wilson. He only said, however, 'They were only secondarily instrumental in the matter, my dear madam ; I was the prime mover ; and one of them is not a Catholic, but a heretic of the most confirmed and contumacious type.'

'I will pray for her conversion,' said the Lady Prioress ; 'she must be a good woman.'

The conversion of Lady Alice Browne to the Roman Catholic religion was an idea of such astounding improbability that Father

Wilson had never entertained it before. It was to him one of those numerous things, desirable in themselves no doubt, the fruition of which he looked for as possible in the next world, but gave up in this. Mrs. Lionel, also, dimly thought that the Lady Alice of old times must have changed considerably to render such an event in any way likely.

The time, however, had come for departure, and the Prioress parted from Mrs. Branscombe with many tears on both sides. The latter thought that the trial was over, but it was only beginning; the whole establishment, from the youngest pupil to the oldest nun, were waiting for her on the terrace. There was but one exception,—Sister Podagra was nowhere to be seen, on which the Prioress congratulated herself, as she would have been sure to make herself disagreeable.

When Mrs. Branscombe got among them

her heart failed her at seeing what love she was leaving, and thinking what a dim, uncertain, cold world lay outside that warm pleasant garden. They all surrounded her, asking her to remember them, asking kisses, asking the acceptance of some trifling gift. Marie Latude had given her a great bouquet in saying another farewell, and was standing like a rose spangled with dewdrops. Mrs. Branscombe moved towards the gate: it was all over!

Not quite; there was one thing more to be got over. Sister Podagra, crossest of the Sisters, dashed out of the *conciergerie*, and had her in her arms with vehement incoherent ejaculations, some of which seemed to be rather of a secular nature, and to savour of the old Adam; such as (I quote in self-defence) her saying that Marie Latude would not be half as pretty as she (Mrs. Branscombe) was

at her age, for Breton girls never lasted. But when Sister Podagra became coherent, it seemed that she wanted to give her beloved one a present.

‘It is all I have to spare in the world, my love,’ she said. ‘But when you get old and grey, and perhaps cross—no, that you will never be—like I am, they will put you in mind of me when you read your Breviary with them, will they not?’

Here she produced her present, a pair of spectacles in an old shagreen case.

‘They belonged to my mother, my child,’ she continued; ‘they are very good, all she had was good, and I have another pair. You will use them when I shall have been long in my blessed and eternal peace: and then you must think of me, not as cross old Podagra, but as a bright angel in Heaven, with all mists cleared from my eyes for ever.’

She was gone, and Mrs. Branscombe was in the carriage with a heart well-nigh broken. The gate was closed, and the horses went on. After a time she raised her head from the hands in which she had buried it. Behind were the towers of the convent rising above the trees; and before her stretched the long white poplar-bordered road leading—whither?

CHAPTER XXV.

A WET AFTERNOON AT POLLINGTON.

A WET afternoon at Pollington was rather a trial of temper to both the worthy brothers. Arthur used immediately after lunch to get out his account-books and work himself into a state of blind ferocity by the muddles in his arithmetic ; landing himself alternately (say) eight or nine thousand pounds each way, either to the good or bad. This was a process which would have had all the pleasurable excitement of gambling to some minds ; but with Arthur it only produced violent physical perspiration, accompanied by more than dubious language.

Such was his employment on the afternoon of which we are about to speak. He had been in such an utter clamjamry at one time about a very large sum of several thousands, odd hundreds, that he groaned aloud (to George's great delight, who was lying on the sofa smoking), and he would have called in that very sharp worthy's assistance and known the worst, had he thought that the result would have gone against him, because then he could have pleaded poverty to his brother ; on the other hand, if the result had gone the other way, George would taunt him into an advance, as sure as fate. At this crisis the devil—whom he had been piously invoking all the afternoon, and to whom he had frequently presented his pen, his ink, his accounts, his estate, himself, and lastly, with extreme willingness, his brother and his brother's cigar—took pity on him, and re-

mindcd him of his banker's pass-book, where he found the missing money.

With restored good humour he wiped his pen, put up his books, and almost kindly proposed to his brother (of whom he had just before made a present to somebody) to play a game of *ecarté*. 'Now I wonder what he wants of me,' thought George.

The fact was that for Arthur to play *ecarté* with George meant losing money to a dead certainty. Arthur was George's match at billiards, and would always play with him after he had ascertained beforehand that George could pay if he lost—not otherwise—because an I O U of George's might come in handy as a pipelight, but was of no other use whatever. At *ecarté* Arthur always lost, and paid, so when the game was proposed George perfectly well knew that he would have to give his *quid pro quo* to Arthur. This vir-

tuous brother determined to absorb himself in the game so strongly as to render conversation impossible until his brother had paid him, and also to play as long as he could.

Sometimes when George was very clamorous for money, the economic Arthur would allow him to win it, instead of giving it him straight, thereby, as he confided to Cross, getting his amusement for his money. This, however, was not one of those occasions; firstly, because George, having made a rather scandalous but successful campaign among some of the lower betting men (he had long been warned off the Heath) who were obliged to pay in order to keep the few remaining rags of character on their backs, was very flush of money, and had talked about the affair with his brother; and secondly, because so close an observer as George could not but be aware that Arthur's face had something important in it.

They played, at the stakes which George had proposed, and Arthur played a little worse than usual: he lost persistently. At one point he made a careful calculation, and George thought that he was going to stop; but he went on a little further, and then, after another examination, declined to play longer.

George did not urge him; he knew he might as well have urged Eddystone Lighthouse. Arthur handing over the money, just twenty pounds, said, ‘That’s all—no more,’ as if he had been feeding a dog, and was showing him the empty plate.

George, by way of leading to a conversation, offered Arthur a cigar, which had the effect of putting all Arthur’s carefully arranged thoughts temporarily into an inextricable confusion. If George had asked *him* for a cigar, and sworn at him if he did not give him one, *that* would have been in

the nature of things, and would not have upset him at all; but that George should offer him one was a portentous and disturbing fact. With singular presence of mind, however, he took the cigar, and thanked him; beyond that he was incapable of doing anything, but remained buried in thought; the result of which was:

‘What a fool that brother of mine is with his money when he gets any. I believe that he would lend me a sovereign at this moment, if he thought it was a bad one.’

But this profound thought, not taking the outward form of human speech, the result was that he remained perfectly dumb; and as George from previous experience had not the least idea how long he would remain so, thought that he had better begin himself, which he did with considerable dexterity.

‘Arthur, my dear fellow, I do hate asking your servants for anything after the rowing I got last week; but as I see you wish to talk to me, and as I have been smoking for two hours, I wish you would let me have some beer.’

‘The man wants beer,’ said Arthur suddenly. ‘My own brother wants beer; and I should like some myself now I think of it. Let us have some sherry, George—ring for the man, and tell him to bring some sherry, George. Much better at this time of day.’ George agreed.

Gabriel brought the sherry, and then went away, shutting the door after him. George had sudden and swift occasion to go into the next room. What he discovered there was only known to Gabriel and himself; for Arthur, bringing his ideas into a focus, never heard the further door locked,

or George saying to himself anything like ‘Cursed young spy!’

He came back with a smooth face, however, and found his brother with all his senses about him. At first he looked at the sherry, but Arthur had taken very little of that: he concluded that he had got his wits together without *that* help, which was the fact. The following conversation was carried on by the two brothers while they were drinking together, with the long thoughtful pauses on the part of Arthur which I have described before, but will not again inflict on the reader.

‘George, I really and honestly want you to do nothing against yourself. If I did, you would find out, and not do it; but I want to come to a bargain with you, and I would be generous.’

‘Yes,’ said George. ‘If you can find a

man who ever heard me say behind your back that you were a bad fellow, I will give you five pounds.'

This happened to be almost true. Arthur continued :

'I want you not to tell Cross something.'

George mentally made a present of Dr. Cross to the same person to whom an hour ago he had himself been given by his brother Arthur. If the devil was enabled to accept all that was given him, he would have to go to a great expense in building.

'What is it, of all things, which you do not desire me to tell Cross?' he asked. 'I thought he knew everything.'

'No, he does not know about Struan.'

'The dandy man, who bought the picture? Why, he was here with him!'

‘Ah, but Struan has been here since—since you have been away. And I don’t want Cross to know it.’

‘Have you sold anything else to him?’ said George.

‘No, George, upon my honour and word I have not. But he has been here wanting to buy, and I don’t want Cross to know it.’

‘*I shan’t speak,*’ said George. ‘*I am not afraid of Cross, like you are. I am not afraid of crossing him. He knows much which is bad about me, but it is of no use to him, because all the world knows it. He knows something about you, and it is worth your while to keep it secret. You have a little more character left than I have, though not much. Cross is nothing to me. I am a free-lance : I will tell him or leave him in ignorance of anything—which you choose.*’

‘ I thank you,’ said Arthur. ‘ Now this man Struan wants to buy some of the things. You may say that they are heirlooms—I may deny it ; we might go to law and spend more money than the things are worth. Will you let me sell them without trouble, if I hand over part of the money in ready cash to you ? ’

‘ They are mine at your death, you know,’ said George, musing.

‘ Ah ! but I might live for thirty years, and cut off your ready money at any time, —leave alone going to law with you.’

‘ Well,’ said George, after a long pause ;
‘ *I’ll trade !* But on the sole condition that you tell me the greatest lie which was told ever in the world. If I ask you, have you left everything you can to Cross, will you say “ No ” ? ’

‘ I can’t do it, George. You must trade

without that. I have done so. But you will have plenty when I am dead ; and you will be much better off before I am dead if you will keep in with Cross and me.'

'You will give me one-third?' said George.

'Surely,' said Arthur.

'And you will let me live on here even if Cross opposes?'

'He will not ; but if he does, I'll take care about it.'

It was time to dress for dinner ; a neighbouring squire was coming, so they went through that ceremony. As he took his idle way out of the room, George said to Arthur,—

'When do you expect Struan here next?'

'To-morrow,' said Arthur. 'I forgot to tell you that. Cross is in France, and the present time is the best.'

‘But what an ass you are,’ said George. ‘Don’t you see that if I allow you to sell what are practically my things for Cross’s benefit, that he can’t object to the buyer?’

‘I would rather have them apart,’ said Arthur. ‘I don’t know why—but I would rather; and I would rather that you would not talk to Cross about the matter.’

When George was landed in his room, and had partially undressed himself, he began a soliloquy at the very point where his brother had left off.

‘Not tell Cross! What an unutterable fool you are, Arthur Branscombe. Not tell Cross! What? That you have come to an arrangement with me for a good allowance (it shall be no less) to let you get rid of the heirlooms by degrees, so that you, my sweet Cross, become so much the richer by every year you allow him to live. Why, if I conceal

the fact of this arrangement from Cross, he would think that he had got as much as he was likely to get, and he and I should be in possession—I of the entailed, he of the personal property—in three months!

‘Yes, dear Cross, I thank you deeply for your little arrangements for getting rid of my brother, and leaving the suspicion, if not the proof of the deed, on me; you are very good. Once when Arthur was more than usually blackguardly to me, I said to him in the billiard-room, “I shall kill you some day.” And that young noodle Gabriel, who is always listening, but never hears the right thing, overheard it, and told it to the butler, and the butler told it to you, and then you told the whole housekeeper’s room that they must be prepared for violence. I think, dear Cross, that I am your match, however!

‘I don’t *want* Arthur to die; I’d sooner

see you —— than Arthur ——.’ He put the case strongly.

‘I shall stay here and watch you, my friend. I wonder how many of your patients you have put to sleep in your time ! There is one thing I can tell you, that I shall not leave you and Arthur in the room together with the Curaçoa bottle—no, nor still more particularly with the Noyeau !

‘How nicely it could be done, could it not, my dear ? Dr. Cross, a physician of eminence, was the first witness. He recognised the body of his friend ; he had been staying in the house, and had gone to bed : deceased had been drinking rather heavily with his brother, whom he had left alone with him. Was aroused in the middle of the night by the servant : unfortunate friend beyond hope ; Noyeau bottle empty ; strong smell of Prussic acid in the

breath, doubtless from the large quantity of Noyeau drank. Stomach pump; death. Dr. Letheby and contents of stomach; eminent analyst proved that he found enough Prussic acid to set up five bottles of Curaçoa, and innocently remarks that he wonders that Mr. George Branscombe is not dead too. Dr. Cross begs to be allowed to say that Mr. George never touched liqueurs of any kind, and could not bear the smell of them. Suspicion—search—little bottle of Prussic acid, and partly empty, found in George's dressing-case. Then United Presbyterian—or U P—with George, and everybody saying that they wondered it had not happened before, with a man of my character. No, my dear Cross—no !'

CHAPTER XXVI.

GEORGE DRIVES CHANTICLEER.

THERE were carriages enough at Pollington, but they were seldom used,—so little, indeed, that one carriage horse (with generally only one relief) was considered sufficient to draw them all. Arthur contented himself with a handsome brougham to take him to Sessions and to sales; but this brougham was the best turned-out in every way of any for miles round; it might have appeared in the Park to the envy of everyone.

There were plenty of carriage horses also, enough to mount two batteries of Artillery,

but they were never used. Arthur was one of the greatest breeders of carriage horses in England or France, and George earned part of his income by helping to break and drive them ; Arthur had once entrusted him to sell one, but it did not do. George sold the horse very well, but then he kept the money, and never came back until he had spent it all,—which made Arthur remark to Cross that George was not only unbusinesslike, but ungentlemanlike. Master George after this might sell as many horses as he liked, but the horses were only delivered on the receipt of cash—(no foreign bank notes, no unknown cheques for Arthur)—out of which he got eight per cent.

George going into the stable-yard on the morning after the late conversation with his brother, found the brougham ready harnessed—not with the usual family horse, though he

was handsome enough, but with the best horse in the stable, a young bay of nearly seventeen hands, for which Arthur wanted two hundred guineas, and who was fidgeting and twitching in a very uncomfortable manner.

‘What the —— are you taking this horse out for?’ he said to the groom, the one with whom he had quarrelled.

‘Going to fetch Mr. Struan from the station, sir,’ said the young man. ‘It is master’s orders. Mr. George, sir, I am sorry I spoke saucy to you the other day. I wish you would go with me, sir, for I am afraid of him.’

‘Keep him quiet a minute,’ said George. And he ran into the house, and up to his brother’s bedroom. His brother was at his toilette.

‘Arthur,’ he said, ‘you are sending out Chanticleer?’

‘I want Struan to see him.’

‘He will see him with the shafts behind him across-country if you send him with Jacob alone. The lad funks him.’

‘But you drove him perfectly well the other day.’

‘I did,—yes. But the horse has not passed my hands. You must listen more to me: if you want Struan to see that horse in form, I must drive him.’

‘It’s devilish civil of you, George,’ said Arthur; ‘but you will lose your breakfast. Go by all means, and thank you.’

George ran down into the hall, caught up his best hat and gloves, and was on the ‘bench’ with his gloves in the crown of his hat, which was well rammed on, in two minutes or less.

‘Now Jacob, old boy, make him move.’

More easily said than done. The horse would not move, though Jacob tried to lead him.

‘Get behind his blinkers, and hold on by the *bearing* rein.’

It was the first time Jacob had ever heard of *that* being done, but he did it.

A slight touch with the whip, and a shake of anger from the horse ; a stronger touch, and an indescribable furious attempt to get out of the harness (a thing which a South American horse would have done in a minute), then three dexterously severe lashes from the whip, given puzzlingly in different places.

The horse dashed at his collar now and felt it, as did Arthur’s best brougham ; the horse made three plunges forwards, but was made to feel the bit each time. Sweating with terror and anger, he stopped ; the

whip was gently on his flank as a warning. Surrounded by nameless and invisible horrors, he dared neither stand still nor bolt ; he did not know what to do, and so he walked with his splendid legs trembling in fear. That was right ; George let him know it.

‘Pat his neck and stroke his nose, Jacob,’ he said ; and the horse went forward with more confidence. Once out of the stable-yard and in the avenue, a touch of the whip made the animal break into that slinging English trot which had been hereditary in his family for two centuries ; finding that this was the thing required of him, he did it with a will, just as an elephant would, and made Arthur’s empty brougham fly through the crackling gravel somewhat unsteadily. George had one fright before he got out of the park ; the herd got startled, and came down on them, the bucks leading, nearly

dashing against the carriage ; but Chanticleer knew *them* very well, he had grazed with them for three years. He proceeded on in his own splendid style, as if he would say, ‘ You lumbering clowns of deer, see how fine I am with a carriage behind me ! ’ He rejoiced in his slavery,—he was proud of his work ; and the man who had tamed him was George Branscombe. We see the same thing occasionally in beings of higher organisation than horses. Why not ?

When they got out into the lanes and the roads leading to the station, the horse went splendidly. George talked with Jacob a great deal, gave him five shillings, apologised for his ill-temper on a previous occasion ; both which things, combined with George’s splendid driving, opened Jacob’s heart, and he talked to George respectfully—certainly in *manner*—and yet without a ghost of re-

spect as to *matter*. For Mr. George Branscombe's character was not one to inspire moral respect, drove he never so wisely.

George heard many things about his neighbours, some of which he knew before, and some which were fresh to him. He heard about the paternity of a child with utter indifference; and I mention this because George was a peculiarly 'moral' man, at all events in the country; he heard with equal indifference the fact that Mr. Struan had stayed at Pollington for ten days during his absence; that Mr. Lionel was dead in Bedlam, and that Mrs. Lionel had come to the Grange with the child reported to be poisoned to claim the heirship for him. All this was a mass of unimportant folly to George, except the fact that Struan had been at Pollington for ten days; and he did not know exactly what to make of that.

When Struan arrived at the station, he found as he got out of the carriage a remarkably well-dressed young man, looking as if he had come out of a bandbox, waiting for him, who introduced himself thus,—

‘You remember George Branscombe. My brother has sent the carriage for you. Have you any luggage?’

‘Thanks, very much,’ said Struan. ‘I have my portmanteau. I will see after it.’

George went back to the carriage, and caressed Chanticleer until the whistle had sounded and the train gone on. Then he entered the carriage with Struan, and left Jacob to sink or swim, which seemed remarkable after the extreme anxiety he had exhibited to drive the horse *to* the station.

Jacob swam however, and brought them safely to the Hall door. When Struan and George got out, George pointed out the horse

to him, and in doing so seemed as though continuing a conversation.

‘I will think through all that you have said: but look at this horse. *I* broke him.’

‘He is a splendid horse, and he has carried us well. He does you credit. What is his price?’

‘Arthur wants two hundred guineas.’

‘No!’ said Struan. ‘The horse is too young and too rash; he is in a lather now. You must drive him a little more yourself, George Branscombe, before he will fetch that. No one is listening now. Our bargain stands?’

‘Assuredly.’

‘You will be in my bedroom by twelve?’

‘Yes.’

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.



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